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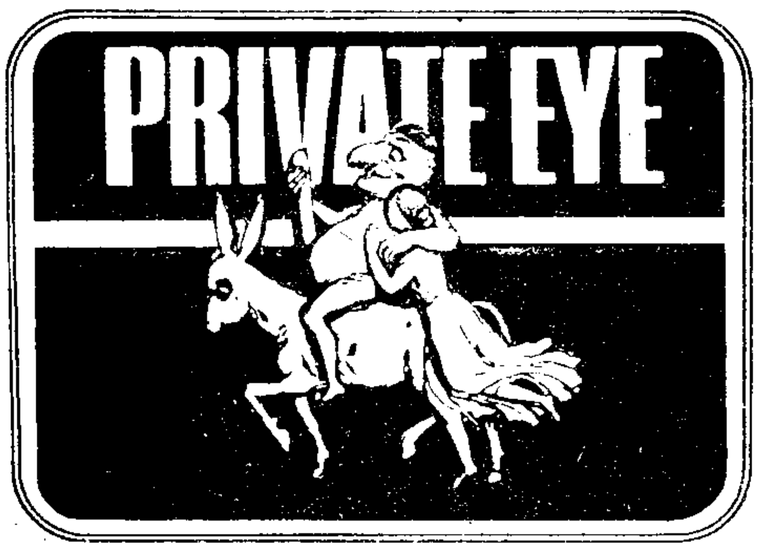

Blair today, gone tomorrow

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THE government still has its head in the sand over the NHS National Programme for IT, even after last week's disastrous report from the Public Accounts Committee – probably its most comprehensive demolition job on a major government project.

MPs called for a root and branch review, yet health minister Lord Hunt claimed that the PAC report was "based on a National Audit Office report that is now a year out of date. Since then substantial progress has been made and the NAO recommendations have already been acted on."

Alas, there were few serious NAO recommendations to act on as it was bullied by the agency running the programme, Connecting for Health, into producing a whitewash. And the PAC report was actually based more on information submitted by experts since the NAO reported, plus 49 questions posed by Tory MP Richard Bacon that should have been put by the NAO in the first place.

And progress has been anything but "substantial" – and where there has been action "progress" is not quite the word. Milton Keynes hospital installed a new system in February, since when thousands of patient records have gone missing. Seventy-nine members of staff have written an open letter declaring the system "not fit for purpose".

The future looks no brighter as the plan to shift responsibility from the woeful CfH to strategic health authorities is already behind schedule – partly, perhaps, because of the admin costs they would have to take on. One of Bacon's questions revealed there were 471 consultants at work in CfH at daily pay rates up to £2,493. As the *Eye* might have mentioned before, the same consultancy industry now getting even richer from the programme had a big hand in bringing it about in the first place.

WHILE it struggles to fund the right body armour, trucks and helicopters for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the MoD is throwing billions at an American warplane that is late, not properly tested and getting more expensive by the year.

In 2001 Geoff Hoon committed to buying the US Joint Strike Fighter to replace Harrier Jump Jets by 2012. Britain has spent £560m helping the Americans develop the planes, and expects to spend £2bn more buying them.

But a report from the US Government Accountability Office highlights delays and rising costs: estimates are up $19.8bn on the year before. The GOA was particularly worried that delays in building the plane meant the manufacturers, mainly Lockheed, had a "risky acquisition strategy that concurrently develops and produces aircraft". The planes would normally have seven years of flight testing before being put into active service, but the delays mean they will be deployed before final testing ends.

The MoD, it seems, is perfectly happy with all this, telling *Private Eye* the jets show "very encouraging results" and that because of "incremental approval on the project as a whole" it would be able to manage Britain's involvement.

HER MAJESTY'S Courts Service was founded in 2005 to speed "the effective delivery of justice". Here's hoping, but two new recruits to the board have been involved in some of the worst bureaucratic cock-ups of recent times.

Maggie Semple was in charge of the learning centre at the Dome, after which success David Blunkett gave her £20m to build the Experience Corps, a charity to promote volunteering by the over 50s. Beyond a "birthday card to celebrate Tony Blair's 50th birthday week" in 2003 (*Eye* 1080), it seems to have done little besides email questionnaires to oldies.

Faith Boardman has an equally striking record. As chief executive of the Child Support Agency from 1997 to 2000 she oversaw what officials described as a "disturbingly poor service". In 2005 she was booted out of her job as boss of Lambeth (*Eyes passim*) after failing to turn the council around and receiving a dismal annual appraisal – none of which stopped her picking up a payoff worth at least £1m over ten years. Worse given her new job, in 2001 Boardman had refused to reinstate a sacked Unison steward and housing worker even after the council's own inquiry found endemic racial and sexual discrimination, an Employment Tribunal said he had been unfairly dismissed and the Employment Appeals Tribunal agreed. Who better to run Britain's courts!

THE architects of the successful London 2012 Olympics bid are already doing very well from their handiwork.

A year ago Mike Lee, London 2012's crucial PR director and special adviser to bid chairman Lord Coe, set up a new PR agency – and it hasn't been slow to trade on his Olympics "success". Lee is now coining it in with a juicy contract for his new firm to advise VisitBritain, formerly the Tourist Board, on how to exploit the Games to attract tourists. Nice work.

THE Freud Review on helping the jobless back into work looks set to assist another needy group: private firms.

Its author, David Freud, admitted there was "no conclusive evidence that the private sector outperforms the public sector on current programmes" – but said companies should take the work from jobcentre staff anyway.

He can't have looked very hard for his evidence. In 2006 the Department for Work and Pensions published a study on the Action Team for Jobs programme comparing the work of private sector teams – many run by Labour donor Sir Alec Reed – and jobcentre staff and found the jobcentres hit more of their targets and were especially good at helping difficult cases among the long-term unemployed, older people and those on sickness benefit. The private sector, meanwhile, was paid a flat rate of £2,000 for each job placement and found it more "cost effective" to focus on younger people out of work for less time, including those not on benefit at all.

David Freud has a history of questionable judgements. As an investment banker for UBS Warburg, Freud helped put together the sale of Railtrack and had to defend the low sale price in Parliament. Freud also designed the 1998 rescue of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, which passed huge costs to the taxpayers. Alas, now Gordon Brown has backed his review its recommendations look likely to happen – a cause of rejoicing to those private providers who can expect to see far more of taxpayers' cash.

GORDON BROWN may think twice before venturing out for dinner at Locanda Locatelli again, as he did last week.

It is also a favourite eaterie for financial tycoons who are none too impressed by his amnesty for holders of offshore bank accounts – which they say isn't an amnesty at all since anyone owning up will have to pay a 10 per cent fine, netting the Treasury an estimated £5 billion.

After dining there last Wednesday with Rebekah Wade, the Chancellor left the restaurant to a chorus of boos and chants of "amnesty, amnesty!" from ill-mannered millionaires.

- NHS set to meet Hewitt's deficit promise
- Chancellor acted on best advice -Balls

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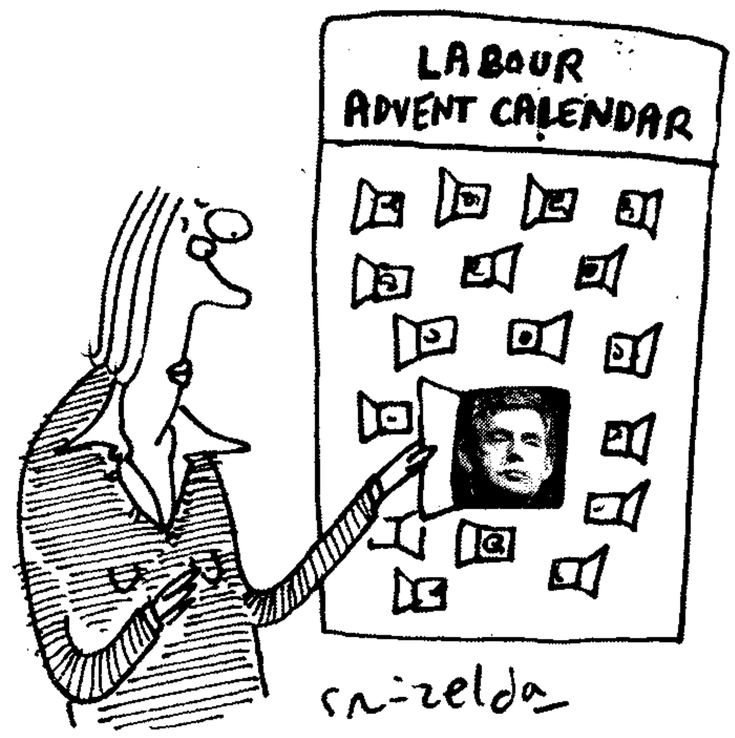
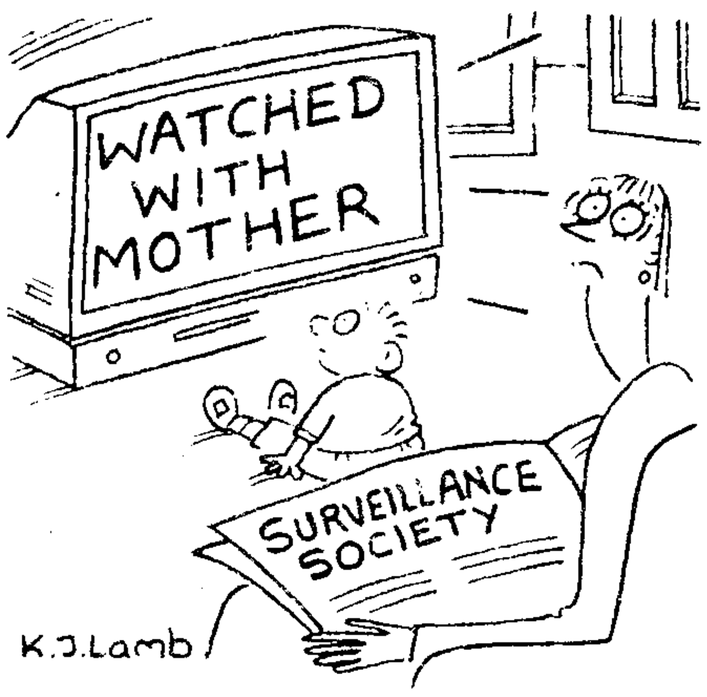
Yahoo News website





EDITORIAL

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ABC

Street of Shame

WHY are *Sun* hacks suddenly so eager to plug the London Kriotherapy Centre in Battersea?

On 11 April Dave Kidd reported the real reason for Manchester City's "amazing 3-1 win at Fulham": the day before the match, the players went to the kriotherapy centre and spent "three minutes in a chamber at -135 degrees for a revolutionary new fitness regime".

Two days later, football hack Neil Custis took up the baton. "Stuart Pearce reckons his Manchester City team had an ice little advantage over their relegation rivals," he chortled. "The City boss moved out of relegation trouble after his team visited the London Kriotherapy Centre before their Easter Monday win." The centre, Custis revealed, "eases fatigue, boosts healing after injury and accelerates the body's recover from exercise". As Pearce told the paper, "We are always looking to get an extra edge... A centre like this provides that and we may look at doing it again."

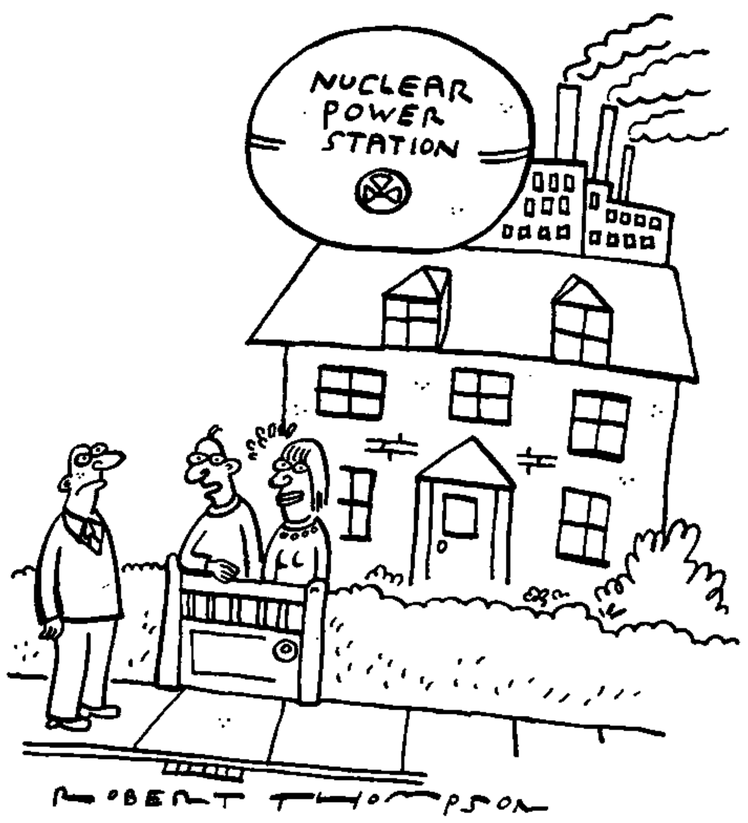
We can expect plenty more in this vein. For the man who runs the Kriotherapy Centre, former racing trainer Charlie Brooks, is the latest paramour of weirdo *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade.

JEREMY CLARKSON used his *Sun* column on 14 April to describe a day he spent with Prince Harry in Barbados over Easter.

Alas, their private date together was constantly spoiled by the presence of intrusive photographers, leaving Clarkson sympathising with the plight of the Prince.

"At every table there were two men, who each had a bag full of cameras. And outside, in every bush and behind every tree, there were more men and more cameras... They were after him and his girlfriend Chelsy. And so began a game of cat and mouse that left me reeling... We had to crawl through half a mile of mosquito-infested jungle to reach a [tennis] court that could not be overlooked by the paparazzi."

So which tabloid newspaper published five stories about Harry in Barbados, every one illustrated by paparazzi photos, in the week leading up to Clarkson's account? He omitted to say – perhaps wisely, given how much it pays him.



"We were going to have a wind turbine but they're not very efficient"

TWO YEARS after he was sacked as editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* in a brutal "binbagging", could Dominic Lawson be on the verge of an unlikely comeback at the paper?

Lawson, who now works as a columnist at the *Independent*, was spotted lunching recently with the current *Telegraph* editor, Patience Wheatcroft, at Roussillon restaurant in Pimlico.

The pair's efforts to keep the lunch secret were not altogether successful. On arrival at the swanky eaterie, they were embarrassed to discover that they had been seated next to a table occupied by Alasdair Palmer, public policy editor of, er, the *Sunday Telegraph*.

A LUCKLESS sub-editor at the *Daily Telegraph* has paid the price for daring to tamper with the prose of columnist Michael "Hendo" Henderson.

Writing about cricket cheats, Hendo recalled the story of W.G. Grace replacing the bails after being bowled and announcing, "they've come to watch me, not you". The sub saw fit to amend this to: "They've come to see me bowl, not you bat."

Henderson complained to his boss Simon Heffer, who gave the miscreant a thorough bollocking. "They've come to see him write," he roared, "not you sub."

IN THE latest *Spectator* Melanie Phillips makes the startling claim that Iraq *did* have WMDs – but they were all spirited away to Syria after the American invasion. Her sole source for this is one Dave Gaubatz.

"You may be tempted to dismiss this as yet another dodgy claim from a warmongering lackey of the world Zionist neocon conspiracy giving credence to yet another crank pushing US propaganda," she writes. "If so, perhaps you might pause before throwing this article at the cat. Mr Gaubatz is not some marginal figure."

No indeedy, as a glance at his website (oddly unmentioned by Mel P) will confirm. "National Existence is political order experienced by men of the nation as a Rise to Being," it declares. "Its opposite is a replacement of political order experienced by men, women, children and slaves as a Fall from Being. This Redirection in the experience of the Terms of Being (Self, Society, God and World) results in the collapse of Self into Society and all into World. The goal, wittingly or otherwise: a World State."

The name of Gaubatz's organisation is "the Society of Americans for National Existence" – SANE, geddit? "SANE opposes this Redirection and its manifestations: chants of Racism, Democracy, Equal Rights, Human Rights, Women's Rights, Animal Rights, and the always growing list of what is the Single Concept: Certainty/Uncertainty = Science/Open Society = World. To understand this reciprocal and how it affects a convergence of factors bent on the destruction of National Existence is to be SANE. SANE is the first step back into the Present. And it is this step 'back' to National Existence that will secure the present and protect the future."

One quite sees how this stuff would appeal to Mad Mel – but why on earth is the *Speccie* getting mixed up in it?

ISABELLA MACKIE is one of those fortunate 23-year-olds who has a job at the ever-expanding online operation of the Grauniad. Indeed, she has just been promoted.

She is also known as Isabella Rusbridger and is the daughter of the Guardian's editor. To avoid any mutterings about nepotism, she has wisely changed her name to Mackie, her mother's surname.

However, last year she did co-author a Comment is Free article on the relationship of Chantelle and Preston, so she is clearly well-equipped for a prosperous career at her dad's celeb-crazy newspaper.

"DIETS DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH" shrieked the front page of the *Daily Mail* on 10 April, over news that "the world's largest study of weight loss" shows diets rarely work and "may even put lives at risk".

Where better for this news to be revealed than in the paper that has serialised Jo Wood's organic diet (January 2007), The GI Bikini Diet (April 2006), Audrey Eyton's F2 Diet (January 2006), The Chopstick Diet (November 2005), the Curves Diet (January 2004), the Bikini Blitz Diet (June 2003) the Mind over Matter Diet (January 2003) and the Little Black Dress Diet (December 2002)?

Meanwhile the *Mail* continued its tireless quest to improve women's health – though perhaps not their anxiety levels – by revealing the dangers posed by flat shoes. According to "experts", flat ballet pumps mean delicate lovelies are at risk of "damaging their knees, twisting their ankles and stretching the tendons in their legs".

What should women wear instead? Not flip-flops, as last summer the *Mail* warned that they too can be "dangerous" and cause "joint pain, shin splints and twisted ankles", nor platforms, which stories in recent years have shown to bring "foot problems for life". High heels can cause injuries, while trainers lead to "excessive sweating" and fungal infections. What is a girl to do?

One option, of course, would be to avoid reading the *Daily Mail*.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"At my cottage in Somerset... spring was relentlessly on the march... primroses... clematis... wisteria... blue tits... swallows... What we were witnessing was a demonstration of how fast global warming may be happening... Elsewhere the story will not be so pretty: droughts in Africa... starvation... sea level rises will drive millions from their homes..."

– Rosie Boycott, *Daily Mail*, page 3, April 19.

"Yes, global warming may eventually melt the Greenland ice sheet, but this will take hundreds, if not thousands, of years... If every time the wind blows, or it is a bit hot, or a bit parky and they shriek 'global warming', we – the public – will simply start to switch off our attention. The majority of reasonable people will say that this is just the weather."

– Michael Hanlon, science editor, *Daily Mail*, page 15, April 19.

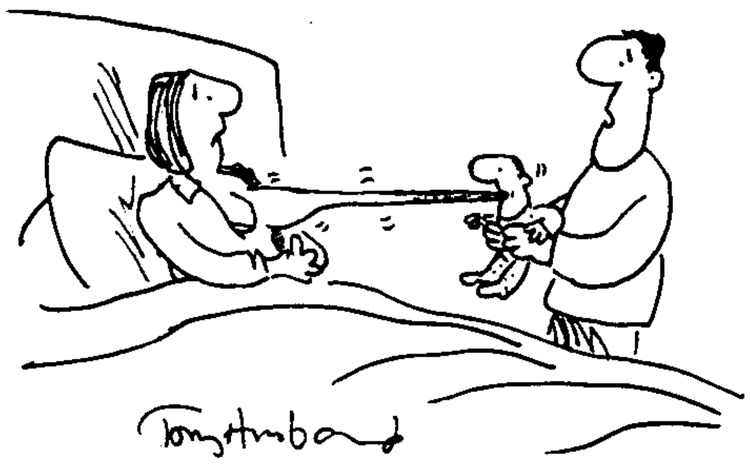
CELIA WALDEN, the diarist at the *Daily Telegraph*, went to a simply marvellous party last Wednesday, so marvelous she could hardly stop writing about it.

On Friday she noted that the guests "at Paper nightclub" included Mohamed Fayed, who was showing off his trim new physique. In Saturday's column the "party at Paper nightclub" yielded another scoop: Labour fundraiser Lord Levy, who was there too, has "perfectly white teeth".

Who hosted this A-list extravaganza? Step forward Celia's goatish swain, Piers "Morgan" Moron!

Meanwhile last week's businesswoman of the year award, sponsored by champagne maker Veuve Clicquot, was held at the London Stock Exchange. For some reason the man chosen to dish out the prize and make the Big Speech was Moron himself. Some of the audience weren't sure that Moron's adventures in the stock market made him an entirely suitable choice.

The assembled ladies didn't much enjoy him then telling them that he was a great admirer of the female form (fnaar, fnaar) though perhaps not of female bosses. The only time he worked for a woman ("I worked UNDER her!" – geddit?), she sacked him.



"I think he's still hungry"

"WILLIAM HAGUE is coining it in through his interests outside Parliament, the latest register of MP's interests reveals," reported the *Sun* last week. "Other Tories cashing in include Ann Widdecombe, who earns £200,000 from writing and TV work... and Boris Johnson, the shadow education minister."

Curiously, the paper found no space to report the second-highest earning MP on the list, Labour's David Blunkett, who pulled in a cool £585,000 last year – £150,000 of it courtesy of the paper that employs him to write an execrable weekly column: the *Sun*.

The *Telegraph*, however, made up for this oversight with a large piece noting the "lucrative outside interests" that mean the "former cabinet minister is on course to becoming a millionaire". "George Galloway is another high earner," political correspondent Brendan Carlin noted. "Television appearances are also proving lucrative for Labour MP Diane Abbott." Of the £250,000 paid annually to Boris Johnson by the *Telegraph*, however, the paper breathed not a word.

Meanwhile, the *Daily Mail* pitched in with an outburst over the £800,000 pocketed by William Hague last year, despite his having since cut down on outside interests by two-thirds.

"Opposition frontbenchers like Mr Hague have a special responsibility to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the attack on an imploding Government," a *Mail* editorial thunders. "It's not as if they are poorly paid. Indeed, their salaries, pensions and allowances are the envy of most of us."

Does Paul Dacre really envy an MP's salary? It seems unlikely. His own earnings as *Mail* editor last year were £1.23 million.

IN *EYE* 1179, we wondered if the *Daily Express*'s decision to print not one single report about the Richard and Judy phone quiz scam might be related to the fact that the lovely couple are *Express* columnists. Now it seems that there could be another reason for this omerta – the paper's own dodgy form in this area.

In 2004, the *Express* ran a special offer whereby readers who collected 36 tokens would be able to claim a cruise for £10. When demand outstripped supply, the *Express* simply informed 25,000 readers that their claims would not be honoured. Nearly three years on, some of those readers have finally won pay-outs in the small claims courts.

But not everyone. Frustrated *Express* readers are now posting their experiences online. One typical complaint reads: "I'm trying to get a result for my mum who's coming up 80. She patiently saved her tokens and in October 2004 was told that her cruise would be with Costa Cruises, leaving on 19th February 2005. Did not materialise. Rise Travel wrote to her in 2005 to confirm her name was listed for a cruise in 2006. Dec 2005, Rise Travel wrote to say *Daily Express* had taken responsibility but my mum's three letters to them (last one recorded delivery) were not answered. Neither did I get anywhere when I tried to help out. No answer, only taped messages on the phone."

This must be what the *Express* meant in its 2006 TV ad when it claimed that "we stand for traditional values".

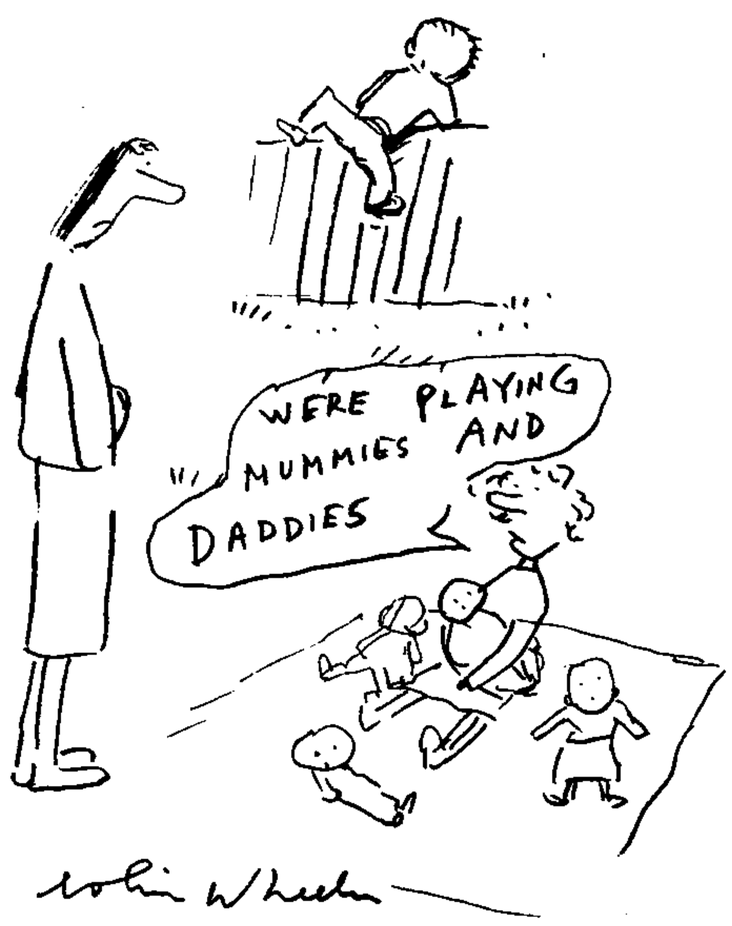
"READER Ricky Sanders is one happy camper after scooping our stunning campervan prize," the *Daily Star* reported on 10 April, with photos of the 24-year-old winner posing alongside a "retro-chic" orange van, supposedly worth £10,000. "Ricky can't wait to be off," it claimed.

It could be a long wait. When he took delivery of the vehicle, Sanders was startled to find that it's a left-hand drive, a fact airbrushed out in the *Daily Star*'s pictures promoting the reverse-auction prize. The blurbs failed to mention a few other details: that the orange import's doors don't lock, the seat coverings are torn, mould is growing on the patched-up canopy and the petrol gauge doesn't work. Oh, and the van isn't registered in this country.

THE *Mail on Sunday* terrified readers on 21 April with news that warring drugs gangs were marking out their territory in "quiet suburban" streets by dangling training shoes from telephone wires.

The evidence? An interview with a youth called "Gaz" who claimed to be in a gang in Kensal Rise, London, and a chat with the concerned vendor of a nearby £400,000 house.

It is a pity *Mail* hacks hadn't been following the US press, where similar claims have been comprehensively debunked since they were first reported in 1996. As one paper put it only last week: "This appears to be a solidly entrenched urban myth."



RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond's loyal troops continue their barrage of abuse against *The Apprentice*. As we noted last month, this may not be unrelated to the *Express* boss's intense loathing for *Apprentice* host Sir Alan Sugar.

Dirty Des turned against his erstwhile chum after being caught shiftily trying to save a few quid on a plane he had chartered from one of Sugar's companies. Hence Sugar's nickname for him – "the *schnorrer*" (scrounger).

Tight-fistedness is a recurring theme in this tempestuous relationship. A couple of years ago Desmond and his wife invited Sir Alan and Lady Sugar to dinner at the modish Wolseley restaurant in Piccadilly. Dirty Des was keen to make an impression. "You know who I am, don't you?" he bragged to the waiters. Alas, none did.

When the bill arrived, the *schnorrer* pulled the oldest trick in the book. "Oh, so sorry," he murmured, "I came out without any cash or credit cards... put it on my account, will you?" The waiter called the manager, who explained to Desmond that "we don't do accounts", not even for porn barons.

Eventually Sugar whipped out his credit card and settled the bill himself.

Virginiaballs

Paper with the most questions

"Why was he free to kill?"

"Did campus gunman's obsession with student spark massacre?"

"Did confusion and delay in raising the alarm cost lives as the timetable of horror unfolded?"

"How many more?"

– headlines in Daily Mail

Paper with the fewest answers

"Yesterday morning, there were just a few shooters at the range set in the forests north of Blacksburg, but the empty cartridges littering the ground suggested this was a popular place. Did Cho Seung-Hui bring his weapons here to practise shooting and reloading – something at which he was obviously proficient? One can only speculate."

– Andrew Buncombe, Independent

"The last mass shooting that was in any way comparable, at Columbine High School... It said something about American society – about the frustrations of suburban life, about the pressures to conform, about time, family life and the ruthless competition to 'succeed'. It may be premature to conclude that any similar pressures lay behind yesterday's killing spree."

– Leader, Independent

"None of that, of course, provides a motive for the shootings, which appear to be entirely random."

– Andrew Gumbel concludes 800 words of speculation as to the killer's motives, Independent

Ethical dilemmas

"Further video footage emerges of Virginia killer talking about his imminent death.

– See the video

– 'You decided to spill my blood'

– Fears led college to commit gunman

– Blog: Should the video be shown?"

– front page of Guardian website

"The release of the photographs and footage, broadcast ceaselessly throughout yesterday and published in newspapers across the globe, was th perfect seal on his plan. But it must have been desperately wounding to those who lost loved o in the carnage and mayhem that Cho inflicted. Police said they deeply regretted that the imag were aired, and fellow students reacted with a that he should be given precisely the platform publicity that his crazed mind sought."

– the Daily Mail, in a piece adjacen large pictures from the footage in q

Reassessed priorities

"Grazia Insider: Virginia Tech studen about the shooting massacre, plus get tic the Grazia/Armani makeover workshop

– email newsletter from Grazi

"I can't have been the only writer learn that Cho Seung-Hui, the perpetr Virginia Tech massacre, was a literat

– Blake Morris

"It was easy to overlook amid th bombs and the Virginia shootings, else died this week. That somethin Labour. David Miliband's decisio the Labour leadership has finally on the machine Tony Blair and P created in 1994."

– Marti

"Comedy in a moment on a news minute about the worst in US history."

GORDON'S WHEEL OF FORTUNE

FRIENDS of Gordon Brown say that when their man becomes PM his solid virtues will stand in a refreshing contrast to the tawdry spin of Tony Blair and the needy unctuousness of David Cameron.

They concede that the electorate may not have voted for him, but insist that we will grow to admire this champion of prudence, thrift, the Protestant work ethic and traditional morality.

The belief in the latter rests on a highly optimistic assumption that he opposes Tessa Jowell's plans to turn the weak-minded into dead-eyed slot machine addicts. Westminster pundits are adamant that Brown was delighted when Parliament stopped the first super-casino going ahead in Manchester. They say he made his opposition to a state-led gambling boom clear when he imposed a 50 percent tax rate on new casinos taking more than £10m a year in the last budget.

They don't ask why a Chancellor who is against casinos wants to tax them. If he disapproves of the fecklessness they encourage, why doesn't he just reverse Jowell's legislation when he becomes PM?

Brown will certainly fire her, but the best grounds for thinking he won't halt the liberalisation of gambling is naked fear at the Treasury. The rise of the internet threw it into a funk. Online gamblers such as PartyGaming set up in Gibraltar and were soon making annual profits of £300m, every penny of it beyond the grasp of HM Revenue & Customs.

The temporarily stalled plan for super-casinos
enerated headlines, but it was just the start of the
vernment's effort to stop tax revenues going
hore by letting British gambling rip. Still on
rds, so to speak, are plans for 16 other
. The newspapers usually call them
" casinos, but there is nothing tiny about
of gambling they will allow.
e Roy Jenkins showed that his
or permissiveness was as
in the Sixties as Gordon Brown's
prudence is today by leaving a
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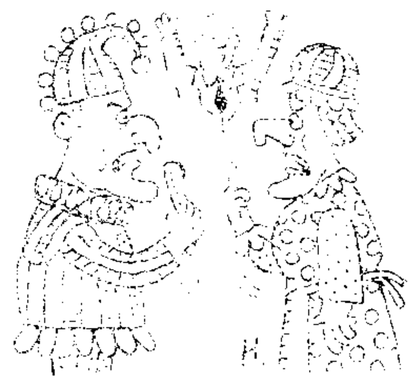
BBC Three, but first
campus massacre

– BBC announcer

CALLED TO ORDURE

WHOEVER becomes Prime Minister could save everyone a great deal of trouble by scrapping the painful "news conferences" Tony Blair has held at Downing Street. These monthly events in No 10's state dining room, modelled on White House press conferences, have become little more than exercises in prime ministerial self-indulgence and craven respect by the London press corps.



Blair always likes to make much of the fact that he has been the first PM to hold regular news conferences, but that ignores the fact that the format he and Alastair Campbell designed gave him complete control. Instead of a senior hack chairing the show and deciding who should ask questions, this task has, disastrously, been left to Blair himself.

Surprise surprise, the PM invariably refuses to call members of Fleet Street's awkward squad (Tory tabloids rarely get a look-in). Instead he invites questions from notorious stooges and dufflers, plus the large number of foreign journalists who plod along. Hacks from Israel, America and Ireland are particularly favoured.

April's press conference was a good example of these pointless events. Our artful hacks were handed some glossy government propaganda ("Building On Progress: Britain In The World") and were subjected to an opening sermon from the Vicar about how wonderful Britain's foreign policy had been under his command. Yeah, sure!

Blair also used the occasion for stage a laughably actorish tribute to America about the Virginia Tech campus shootings. You could almost see him thinking "this should get us some air time on east coast breakfast TV in the US and help my lecture tour bookings". Those tactics used up the hour long conference's first 15 minutes or so.

When reporters were actually allowed to speak and started to ask questions that dented his foreign affairs swashbuckle, Blair pulled Alan B'Stard grimaces. He complained that the media was uninterested in politics.

People like BBC political editor Nick Robinson and ITN's Tom Bradby suspect, understandably, to know about the Labour leadership succession. When did Blair plan to go? Gordon Brown? He point blank refused to say, instead sneering that Robinson and Bradby had plainly "had a little conflab" about it behind his back.

The *Guardian*'s Patrick Wintour credited Blair's rescue at one point, shouting "that's not true!" when Robinson suggested Blair had never apologised for the Iraq war. Wintour was fully

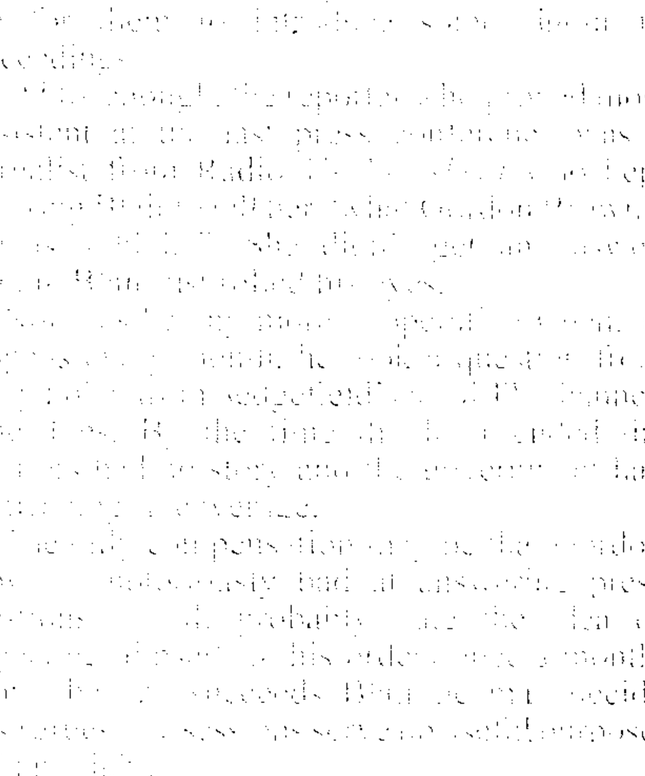
bet when no real races are running, and install lucrative fruit machines. Already we have 30,000 roulette machines in bookies, and poker and black-jack machines will follow, soon.

The argument for and against super-casinos misses the point that mini-casinos have already arrived in every bookies in every high street in the country. Don't expect for a moment that a prudent, thrifty, hard working and unelected Presbyterian will close them down when he finally achieves power.

'Ratbiter'

BY THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

"WELL done, Dessie" – the remark overheard by many seated close to Michael Martin as the entirely independent Speaker of the House of Commons sat down next to a fellow Scot, the minister of [illegible] Des Browne, on his statement to the House about the Iranian captives fiasco.

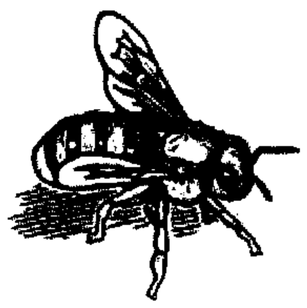


"But it's what he really wanted, Cherie."

Down on the Farm

PITY Britain's poor beekeepers. For 15 years they have been fighting the assault of the deadly varroa mite, which has all but wiped out the billions of wild honey bees which used to play a key part in pollinating our flowers, fruit and vegetables. More recently they have faced a new disaster with the arrival, supposedly from America, of the condition known as Colony Collapse Disorder, which has been killing off bees in their hives.

Now, to add insult to injury, our old friends the Food Standards Agency have persuaded Ofcom to ban television advertising for honey, on the grounds that it is contributing to the epidemic of obesity in Britain's children.



It seems barely credible but Ofcom, at the FSA's behest, has included honey along with Marmite, cheese and olive oil as "junk foods" which can no longer be advertised to children on the grounds that these are bad for their health and can make them fat. But it will still be perfectly legal, under the Ofcom and FSA rules, to broadcast commercials for chicken nuggets, diet cola, white bread and oven chips.

Honey's crime, according to the FSA, is that it contains sugar. No matter that the sugar is entirely natural, as opposed to the white stuff processed out of sugar beet. What the FSA's clever officials have done is to create what they call a Nutrient Profiling Model, based on 100g measures. They have worked out that 100g of the sugar in honey, like 100g of Marmite, would be fattening, and therefore Britain's children must at all costs be kept away from the stuff.

To anyone but the officials of the FSA, this is so self-evidently absurd – honey has for millennia been regarded as one of the healthiest foods on the planet – that a campaign has been launched by the *Grocer* magazine. Backed by the British Beekeepers Association and an array of nutritionists, campaigners are sending letters of protest to Ed Richards, Ofcom's chief executive, asking him to withdraw this ridiculous diktat.

Mr Richards should perhaps be reminded of the FSA's record on grasping which foodstuffs are dangerous. This was the organisation that some years back tried to close down a whole industry – one employing 2,000 people making sausage skins out of lamb's intestines – because it was terrified that sheep might catch BSE. The FSA had been told this by Defra and Professor Roy Anderson, after Defra's testing of sheep brains had shown clear signs of BSE vacuoles. They then discovered that the brains they had been inspecting came from, er, cows.

Another famous FSA stunt was its attempt to close down Britain's £20m-a-year cockle industry because its scientists had found that, when they injected mice with large quantities of cockle meat, the mice all died of what was described as "an unidentified toxin". They then discovered that what was killing the mice was not the cockle flesh but the solvents they used to bind it together.

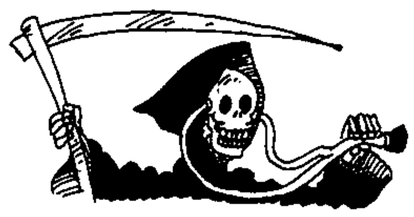
At least the FSA hasn't so far claimed that honey must be banned because it fears bees can catch BSE. But we only need give them time.

'Muckspreader'

A TOTAL of 100 farmers in Wales will be able to benefit from a £70 cash incentive to help semen test one of their bulls.

The funding, which is being offered on a first come first serve basis,

Welsh Assembly literature



Medicineballs

Maternity tatters

HEALTH secretary Patsy Hewitt is at it again, making promises about patient choice that she won't keep. This time it's the turn of pregnant mothers, who, in just two years' time, will be able to choose where they want to give birth (home, midwife units, hospitals, organic gardening centres or in a tepee at an ancient burial monument).

Legally, women have always been able to give birth wherever they want but most are led to believe hospitals are safer. Offering choice to all, including those with higher risk pregnancies, may not be wise but we've known for years that for women with normal pregnancies home birth is safe. You just can't get the staff…

Back in 1992, the Health Committee chaired by Nicholas Winterton reported on the future of the maternity services. It found that women wanted continuity of care during pregnancy and childbirth, choice of site and method of birth and control over the birth process. It concluded that "the policy of encouraging all women to give birth in hospitals cannot be justified on grounds of safety".

In 1993, a Mori poll found that hospital birth was the only option offered to most women and that 73 percent would have liked to discuss alternatives. Of these, 22 percent wanted the option of a home birth. The same year, the Tory's launched Changing Childbirth, which is remarkably similar to "new" Labour's Maternity Matters. Six years of maternal choice later and only three (3) midwifery units in England could deliver the quality of care promised by the Tories – largely due to the national shortage of 5,000 midwives.

In 1994, a large UK cohort study found home birth to be safe for mothers with normal pregnancies, with half the risk of having either an assisted vaginal delivery (forceps or vacuum) or caesarean section. Provided the midwife is competent enough to recognise the rare occasions when transfer is needed and it happens swiftly, home births for low risk women (around 30 percent of pregnancies) are safer than hospital.

Despite 22 percent of women wanting the option of a home birth, only 1 percent have delivered at home since 1980, and half of them unintentionally. So what makes Patsy think she can succeed where the Tories – and the first nine years of Labour – have failed? For a start, she's allocating no (zero) additional funds. And although midwife numbers have increased since the Tories, they are currently being cut or frozen because of hospital debt. The Royal College of Midwives estimates another 3,000 are needed for Patsy's birth plan but only another 1,000 will graduate in 2009. As all health workers (even doctors! – shock horror) are discovering, there's a world of difference between getting a qualification for the NHS and getting a job in it.

We've known for 13 years that carefully selected home births, with adequately trained staff, are safer than hospital. But botched, fly by the seat of your pants "I'm sure the midwife will be here soon" births are not. One guess what "new" Labour, or perhaps even the "new" Tories, will deliver.

P.S. Even those able to pay an independent midwife to deliver their baby at home will soon lose the option, as the government is planning legislation to make professional indemnity insurance, unavailable to independent midwives, a precondition for registering. Choice indeed!

M.D.

"It seems nurses don't have time for the niceties any more"

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE exam board OCR claims to have "consulted widely among examiners, teachers, professional associations, universities and those delivering the existing specifications" before announcing that it was scrapping the ancient history A-level.

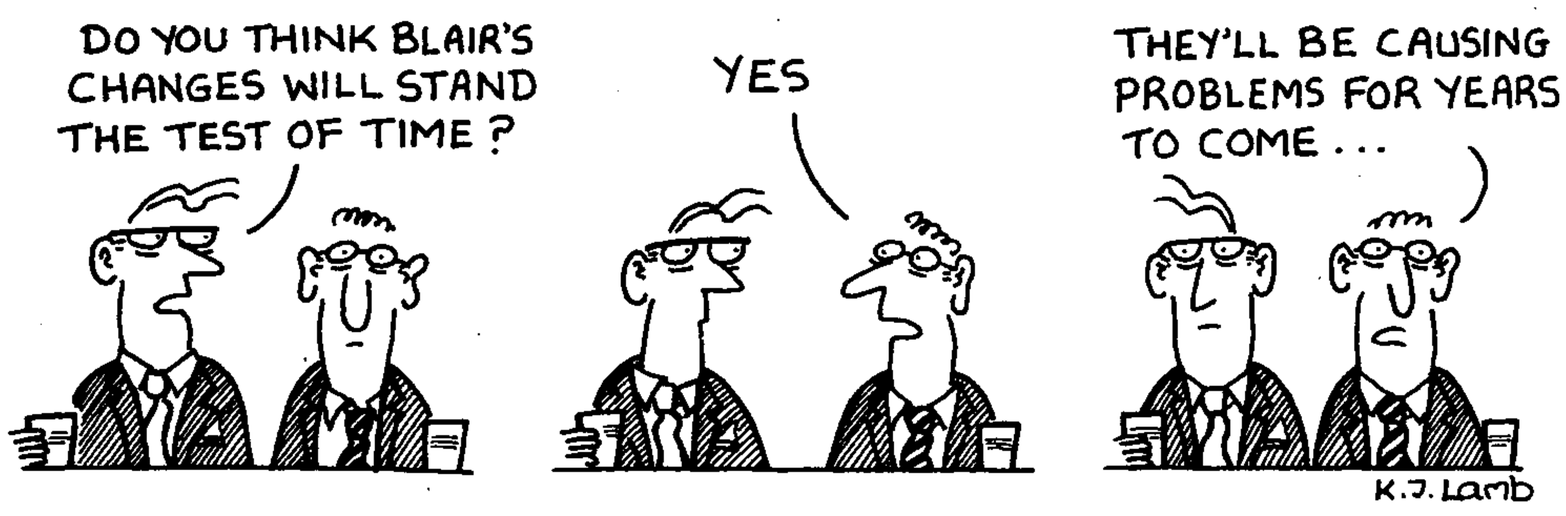
So who did it ask? Well, not the Association for Latin Teaching, the British Academy or the Classical Association for a start. Nor did it consult the Friends of Classics, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies or the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, and even the Council of University Classics Departments was excluded from this supposedly wide consultation. Professors say they were invited to give their views on the future of Classics at A-level some time ago, but the question of actually abandoning the ancient history course was not mooted at the time.

In fact the Joint Association of Classical Teachers' ancient history committee – the people who designed the course specifications for the exam – only found out about the decision a few days before it was made public.

The OCR promised the *Eye* a list of people it had consulted, but none has materialised.

COLLEGE fraudster Stuart Spacey, currently serving 18 months in prison for conspiracy to defraud a subsidiary of Barnsley College (*Eyes passim*), has been ordered to pay a £470,053 confiscation order or face an increased jail term of up to four years.

Spacey pleaded guilty last year to conspiring with the then college principal David Eade to defraud Progress Training over seven years through the operation of several bogus sub-contractors. The case against Eade has been left on file on the grounds that he is not well enough to stand trial.



TV Eye

Virginia Tech Shootings (All Channels)

WHEN the package of vodcasts and statements from Cho Seung-Hui arrived at the offices of NBC, there must have been a mixture of emotions. The thrill of getting ahead of the other networks on the biggest story of the year will have been undercut by a very mild unease that a guy who wished to be on TV after killing 32 people immediately identified NBC as a sort of Al-jazeera for psycopaths.

It's unlikely we'll be seeing adverts along the lines of "When someone has an urgent message for the world..." or "Everyone in America has at least one friend – NBC." Mainly, though, it will have felt like Christmas in that office.

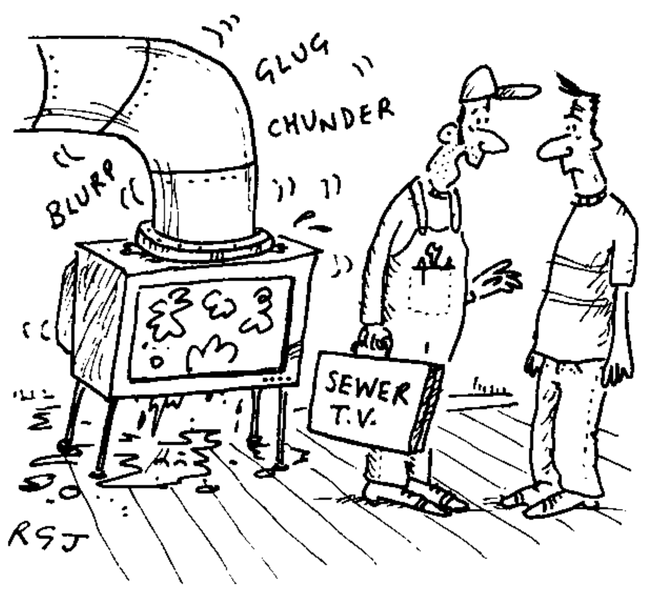
But what's really interesting is the bit of business that happened next. As *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams explained when introducing the first sequences from the lunatic's archive, the station handed over the trove to the FBI on the understanding that they could take a copy for their own use. "Everyone seemed pretty happy with that," Williams twanged in his folksy way.

Well, sure. So a man whose playwrighting teacher was warned not to interfere with his clearly deranged dramas on the grounds that he was expressing American freedom of speech and who was allowed to buy hand-guns at will because of the American right to bear arms was now granted his desire to be even more famous in death than the Columbine killers by the perceived right of American networks to show whatever they want.

All broadcasting risks being taken the wrong way. Some bloke sees sexy Jill Dando reading the news and makes a lethal connection with her in his head. You can't ban newscasts on that basis. Cho Seung-Hui is reported to have been obsessed with the Korean movie *Old Boy*. Even if he was, that's no reason for closing down cinemas and DVD stores, because the movie could at worst be an excuse for or a minor contribution to his actions. The same with the possibility (see last TV Eye) that an Iraq war drama might be posted on the Baghdad net as fact. In all those cases, broadcasters are justified in making a judgement on the relative risk of the product being misused.

Cho's videos, though, were being used precisely in the way that he intended: to make him the world's most known and notorious serial-killer. There must also be a substantial likelihood that some other campus malcontent, seeing the scale of fame that can be achieved with a simple posthumous package to NBC, will do the same one day not very soon, with the inevitable inflation of depravity to make sure it gets on the air.

Throughout last week, NBC, and all the other networks that enviously relayed the Cho material, were allowing their news bulletins to be executive-edited by a dead psychopath. Some freedom.



"All in all, you'll find it provides a similar service to cable"

At least, though, the US networks had the justification that the story was the biggest happening on their patch. Beyond the moral question of whether UK channels should have broadcast Cho's ramblings, there's the bigger journalistic matter of whether the events should have dominated news bulletins here to the extent that they did.

Emily Maitlis was flown to Virginia Tech to co-host the *Ten O'Clock News* live from the campus. *ITN News* made sure that the diary columns noted that, on the day of the slaying, they got their Washington bureau man to the college before the BBC's Matt Frei, who linked it from D.C.

And yet, in reality, this was local American news: a version, greater only in scale, of an event which is specific to US gun laws and psychology. It wasn't 9/11, which clearly had international implications and British involvement. Hungerford and Dunblane, remember, were scarcely covered on American news at all, except for a little self-serving crowing about the fact that tight gun laws didn't seem to spare the moralistic Brits these things. So why should incidents in Virginia lead the UK news for a week?

The question of what counts as news has occupied minds of all sizes at internal and external broadcasting conferences for years now. But a double standard seems to have set in. Most American stories are covered from a parochial British angle: will Dame Helen get the Oscar? How is Heather Ex-Macca doing on *Dancing With The Stars*? This is called "making it relevant to our audience".

And yet other American stories, objectively irrelevant to Britain, are covered as if they had happened in Woking purely because they are juicy, peculiar or violent enough. It's a kind of international visual voyeurism which suggests that, though smug about our gun laws, we shouldn't we too cocky about our broadcasting standards here.

'Remote Controller'

Number crunching

400 ■ people killed in cross-border raid by Sudanese army on Chad last month

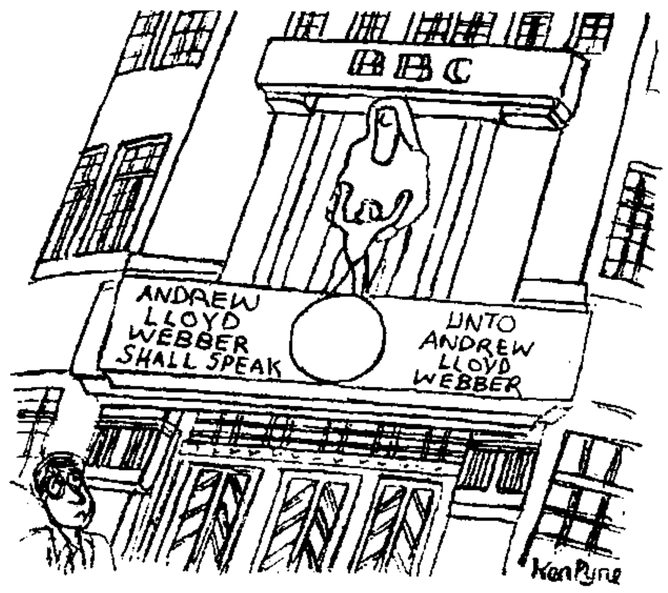
200 ■ people killed in single day of terrorist attacks in Iraq last week

100 ■ people killed in petrol tank explosion in Nigeria last month

100 ■ people killed in mining disaster in Russia last month

60 ■ people killed in single day's fighting in Somalia last week

33 ■ people killed on university campus in America last week



MEDIA NEWS

IS THE new BBC Trust chairman Sir Michael Lyons really, as the Tories claim, Gordon's crony?

If he is then he's a well paid one. A recent parliamentary question from Tory Treasury spokesman Mark Francois has revealed that of the authors of 31 "independent" policy reports for the Chancellor since 1997, Sir Michael is one of only four who have charged for their services. (The others are Andrew Gowers, Professor Martin Cave and Sir Derek Morris.)

But how much has he trousered? The Treasury refuses to say, claiming it constitutes "personal data" whose disclosure would breach the Data Protection Act. Oddly, other departments, including the MoD, provide just such information (see In the Back, page 27). Presumably they are breaking the law in doing so, and the Treasury's silence has nothing to do with embarrassment over how much Gordon has lavished on Sir Michael for his efforts on civil service relocation, flogging government assets, and, recently, local government finance.

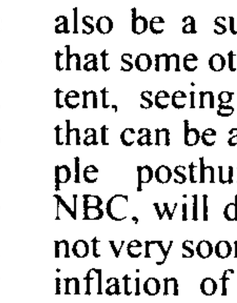
But what's this? A quick check of the FoI archive reveals that in 2005 the Treasury did in fact tell the *Eye* it had paid Lyons £174,100 for consultancy services. His work in the past two years will have bumped this up further. But of course in his new job defending BBC independence he won't have any problem letting the Beeb bite the hand that has fed him so well!

DUMB BRITAIN

Vernon Kay's Gameshow Marathon, ITV2

Vernon Kay: What 'T' is left if you take 93 from 106?

Andrea Catherwood (ITN newscaster): Nine.



BBC Radio Leicester

Presenter: How many pins do you need to knock over for a strike in 10-pin bowling?

Contestant: Well, all of them.

Presenter: And that's how many?

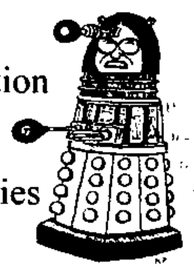
Contestant: Nine.

Breakfast show, Heart FM

Presenter: How long is it since dinosaurs roamed the earth?

Contestant: 800 years.

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Now that it's clear the conversation genuinely can be a creative two-way process, and in many cases multi-way, we are witnessing the possibilities opened up when many ripples bump against one another and the patterns of interference, the 'mash-ups', they create. We have the opportunity more than ever before to willingly seed the clouds of creativity and see a creative rainfall." – *Speech by Jana Bennett, director, BBC Vision*

GOING LIVE

LIVE now to Rachel Harvey (BBC News 24) outside the MoD for the latest on the news of a helicopter crash in Iraq. "What are they saying, Rachel?" "Pretty much what you read out earlier," is the confident reply.

11.30 The Sky at Night Patrick Moore marks 50 years of the astrological series by talking to his younger self, as played by Jon Culshaw. (S) 19604

TV Easy

WITH GMTV's phone-quiz scam splashed all over *Panorama* and the tabloid front pages, why do the channel's bosses still look so cheerful?

Simple. The awesome foursome who run the breakfast show – programme director Peter McHugh, editor Martin Frizzell, deputy editor Malcolm Douglas, and managing editor John Scammell – have just chalked up massive bonuses. Each of them trousered £27,000 for under-spending on the newsroom budget, much to the chagrin of hard-pressed hacks who have to fill holes in the rota "because we don't have enough money to pay for freelances".

Since the Infamous Four are on a percentage of any under-spend on news, they have a powerful reason to avoid stories that might require expense. Last month the station couldn't even send a camera crew to East Anglia where the selfsame John Scammell was fined £3,000 and banned from driving for three years by magistrates at Bury St Edmonds. The court heard he was more than four times over the legal alcohol limit when his car was spotted swerving wildly along the A11 in Suffolk. Scammell's lawyer explained that his client "had attended a lot of dinners and lunches, and probably still had some residual alcohol in his system". This came as no surprise to GMTV hacks, who know that one of Scammell's most challenging decisions every week is advising the rest of the Infamous Four on what vino to order at their executive lunches.

Eamonn Holmes, who specifically excluded Scammell from his leaving bash when he fled to Sky News in 2005, complained at the time that GMTV was too "celebrity-oriented" and didn't broadcast enough news and current affairs. Two years on, it has even less news – but lots of loot from lucrative phone quizzes. Trebles all round!

LUVVIES

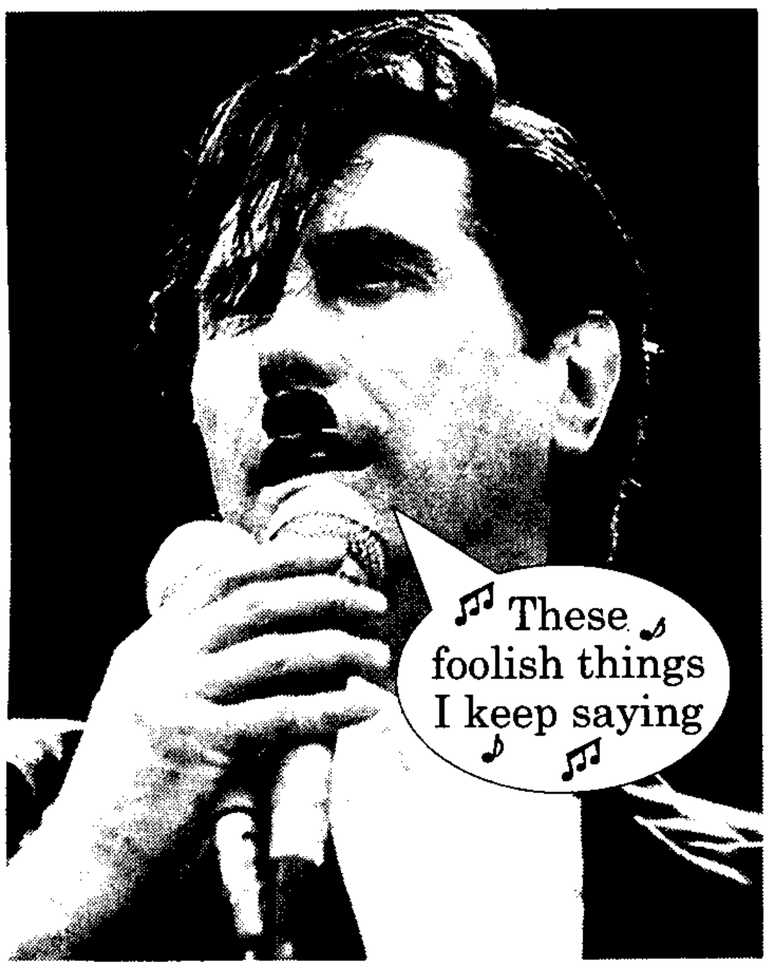
"Because I get so much attention for being sexual and beautiful, I try to down-play that side of myself all the time."

EVANGELINE LILLY ('Lost' star)

Submitted by Sarah Dawson.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

YES IT'S BRYAN FÜHRERRY!



© Reichsy Musik — Greatest Hitlers

NAVAL GAZING: TOP BRASS IN A SPIN

AS MORE details emerge on the background to the Iranian hostage fiasco, the biggest own-goal in the Royal Navy's history begins to look like a publicity stunt that backfired.

When the frigate HMS Cornwall was sent out to the Gulf, high among the Navy's priorities was the need to win more coverage for its efforts in the region. For too long, thought Navy top brass such as the First Sea Lord Sir Jonathon Band, the role played by the Senior Service had been overlooked. Invitations were sent to the BBC, Sky News and Channel Five News to send film crews to cover the Cornwall at work.

Commodore Nick Lambert was not the Cornwall's captain but was using it as flagship in his capacity as commander of the coalition task force 158 in the northern Gulf. On the fateful day, two small inflatables were sent out from the Cornwall to inspect a passing freighter, accompanied by a Lynx helicopter with a BBC crew aboard. They detoured to board another freighter, the *Al-Hanin*, at which point the helicopter, detailed to keep watch over the boarding party, had to return to the Cornwall because the BBC crew had an appointment to interview Lambert.

Lambert had under his command at least four or five vessels which could have stood by to give protection to the boarding party, including two British minehunters and two armed US coastal patrol vessels. But he chose not to deploy them because it would make a better TV story to show the two small British craft doing the job on their own, particularly since one was being driven by Leading Seaman Turney. What better advertisement for the modern Royal Navy than a woman in the front line?

As the Iranians were later to reveal, it was the sight of Turney on Channel Five news that gave them the idea for a propaganda coup of their own. How better to show the Muslim world the sad, soft state of the once-vaunted British navy than to capture a boarding party that included a woman? Thanks to Lambert's decision not to provide proper back-up, the seizing of 15 hostages by just six Iranians made victory all the sweeter.

Back in London the magnitude of the Navy's cock-up was at once realised. Normally a blunder this big would trigger an automatic Board of Inquiry, but that would have compounded the Navy's embarrassment by exposing its real cause: a publicity stunt ordered from the top. Thus was the decision taken, again at the top, that no Board of Inquiry would take place.

Navy bosses needed something to divert media attention, hence the unprecedented decision, personally signed off by Band's number two, Vice-Admiral Adrian Johns, to allow the hostages on their return to become the centre of a media feeding frenzy. This was entirely a service decision, taken under the rules which give the armed services a high degree of autonomy in all operational and service matters. The hapless defence secretary Des Browne was only notified when the whole publicity exercise had been set in motion.

Two days later it was clear the stunt had backfired. Browne insisted that the usual Queen's Regulations prohibiting the sale of stories should be reinstated. But by this time the media and the Tory party, not understanding the protocols of the MoD, were convinced that Browne had somehow been behind a decision taken by Navy top brass. Even, to spice it up further, that Blair himself must have known.

Browne's ingenious comeback, on the day when the Tories were sure they would force his resignation, was to announce two independent inquiries. One would expose the real story of how the hostages had been permitted to sell their embarrassing tales. The other would be the inquiry Band and his fellow admirals had been avoiding all along: how and why the Navy allowed its boys and girl to be captured in the first place – a catastrophic misjudgement for which no one was ultimately more responsible than they.

AD NAUSEAM

WAYNE ROONEY's new TV spot as the face of Coke Zero sees him playing Indiana Jones.

In a pastiche of a scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Rooney dribbles through spinning saw blades, laser guns and spiked swinging cannonballs before destroying an oncoming boulder with a sweet right-foot drive. "The Beautiful Game, without dirty challenges," says the voiceover, in line with Coke Zero's claim that it offers great taste but with none of the sugar.

Rooney may be a practitioner of the beautiful game, but he knows a thing or two about dirty challenges. In a pre-season game in August last year he was sent off for violent conduct after elbowing an opponent in the face. That came only months after perhaps the most famous dirty challenge of recent years, when Rooney was sent off in the World Cup quarter-final after destroying Portuguese defender Ricardo Carvalho's own swinging cannonballs with a well-aimed stamp.

SIGN up now for the "Action for Ads" petition! It's been set up by the industry rag *Campaign*, and it calls upon the government "to recognise the importance of the advertising industry to the UK economy and to resist further restrictions to responsible advertising".

This clarion call comes, says *Campaign*, "amid mounting alarm at the success of pressure groups in calling for more curbs on commercial freedom of speech".

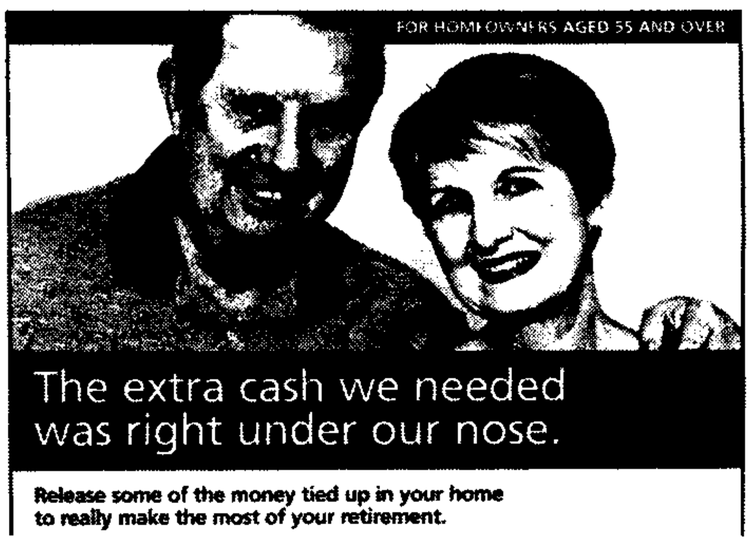
Equating freedom of speech with "commercial freedom of speech" – i.e. freedom to make money – is pretty specious from the outset, as is blaming pressure groups when complaints from the public have vastly increased in the past few years. But the call-to-arms also overlooks the fact that non-broadcast advertising (posters, outdoor etc) have for many years been self-regulated: the ad industry has been given every chance to curb its excesses and has routinely failed to do so.

And the advertising industry is indeed important to the UK economy. In fact it's doing very nicely thank you. Spend on advertising and marketing is rising at its fastest pace for three years.

Still, if you should feel the urge to unite behind the long-suffering, impoverished advertising industry, do head along to brandrepublic.com/campaign and express your views in whatever way seems appropriate.

FINANCIAL services adverts seldom lend themselves to eye-catching visuals, but Norwich Union has found an ideal way to make its current equity release campaign – encouraging couples over 55 to take out second mortgages – stand out from the crowd.

"The extra cash we needed was right under our nose," is the strapline beneath a picture of a


FOR HOMEOWNERS AGED 55 AND OVER
The extra cash we needed was right under our nose.
Release some of the money tied up in your home to really make the most of your retirement.

couple oddly reminiscent of the culture secretary Tessa Jowell and her husband David Mills – the latter currently in the dock in Italy over allegations that he accepted a £300,000 bribe from Silvio Berlusconi and used it to pay off one of five different mortgages he had taken out on their London home.

HACKWATCH

A Fairy-tale Romance

1 January 2006. "Stargazer Mystic Meg has been peeking into her crystal ball," the *News of the World* announces, "and she promises some major surprises in the New Year." Major indeed: she predicts that England win the World Cup, aliens make contact with earth and "Prince William gets engaged to Kate Middleton".

5 February. Confirmation of Mystic Meg's prescience comes from Susie Boniface of the *Sunday Mirror*. "Prince William is getting engaged to his girlfriend Kate Middleton," she discloses. "Wills, 23, is expected to propose this spring and Kate, 24, has indicated she will accept. A formal announcement will be made by Buckingham Palace shortly afterwards." The marriage will, of course, be "the wedding of the century".

9 April. "Exclusive: Is Wills Soon to Wed his Kate?" asks the *Sunday Express*. Royal editor Camilla Tominey exclusively answers her own question in the affirmative. The Queen is about to make William the Duke of Clarence – a "strong signal", apparently, that he "could soon marry Kate Middleton…In previous years, the Queen has given titles to members of her family just before they are to be married."

4 May. William and Kate have been holidaying in Mustique. According to Katie Fraser in the *Daily Express*, "they seemed to be sending the world a message as clear as the Caribbean ocean: that Kate is very much a permanent fixture in William's life".

4 November. Out comes the heavy artillery in the form of veteran royal hack Christopher Wilson. "Though there's no indication when there'll be an official announcement," he informs *Daily Mail* readers, "it is clear that Kate will marry Prince William, possibly as soon as next summer…It's no longer a question of if, but when…William has said: 'I don't want to get married until I'm at least 28 or 30' – but who believes that smokescreen any more?"

3 December. In the *Sunday Times*, Roland White reports "mounting speculation among palace staff" that Prince William is about to announce his engagement to Kate Middleton. 'Believe me,' said one source in the servants' hall, 'this engagement is going to happen'."

9 December. "The royal household is buzzing with rumours that Prince William and Kate are to become engaged at Sandringham over Christmas," Natalie Clarke and Paul Bracchi report in the *Daily Mail*. But, according to "a high-level source", the engagement will remain secret for a few months "before a public announcement is made in the spring". The wedding will then take place in summer 2007. "It is no longer a question of if the couple – both aged 24 – will marry, but when."

30 December. Even the *Spectator* is infected by the love bug, running a cover story by Princess Diana's former private secretary Patrick Jephson. "'Perhaps Miss Middleton…will be our future queen,' I speculated in a Sunday newspaper nearly three years ago. The editor was more cautious. 'More likely, she will not,' he made me add. I

wish I'd stuck to my guns – and stuck on a bet too. The smart money now says that brand Windsor is about to get a much-needed injection of fresh young glamour to complement its established octogenarian market leader." The prospect makes Jephson come over all lyrical. "Miss Middleton's 2007," he gasps, "stretches ahead of her like an enchanted garden."

31 December. Christopher Wilson pops up in the *Sunday Times* with his familiar catchphrase. "It's not a question of if, but when," he pronounces. "They are in effect man and wife already. It's a done deal."

1 January 2007. "Has Prince William already proposed marriage to comely Kate Middleton?" Peter McKay asks in the *Daily Mail*. "Given the amount of speculation about their friendship in recent months, it's difficult to believe the question hasn't arisen between the couple. If it has arisen, surely William will have indicated his intentions. If they are negative on the subject of marriage, would the couple still be together?" Only one explanation is possible: "So I presume the couple have decided to marry and are merely waiting for an appropriate moment to make the announcement."

6 January. McKay's *Mail* colleague Stephen Wright reports that Inspector Knacker has drawn up contingency plans for Kate to have a personal protection officer as soon as the engagement is announced. "As far as we are concerned, it's not a question of if they will be engaged, but rather when," says a senior police source, clearly a keen student of Christopher Wilson's work. "Officers are working on the basis that there'll be an imminent announcement."

10 January. "Royal aides…insist that the wedding speculation has been entirely fuelled by the media," the *Daily Express* notes incredulously. "They say that William is in no rush to marry. But many experienced royal watchers, plus the bookies, are convinced that the marriage will happen." Bookies and hacks are obviously in a better position to know than mere royal aides. The doyen of royal-watchers, *Sun* photographer Arthur Edwards, assures his readers today that "Kate Middleton will be Queen – of that I have no doubt at all. William is clearly besotted with this gorgeous girl. I'm sure that one day they will be walking down the aisle of Westminster Abbey".

13 January. Things must be serious – *Daily Mail* hacks Geoffrey Levy and Richard Kay are on the case. "So just how imminent is an engagement announcement?" they wonder. "February is the traditional month for senior royals to reveal wedding plans. Charles and Diana announced their engagement in February 1981, and married the following July. What an appropriate gesture it would be if William did the same."

28 February. In his *Mail* diary, Richard Kay brandishes another telling clue. Kate "is poised to take delivery of a new Audi – the make preferred by her boyfriend and his family. When Kate, 25, gets behind the wheel of the sporty A3 hatchback coupe next month, it is bound to provoke fresh speculation about when, not if, she is joining the royal family."

6 March. It's official! "Prince William and Kate Middleton will get married, MPs were told today," the *Evening Standard* reports. The source turns out to be *Sun* snapper Arthur Edwards, testifying to a Commons select committee. "She's in love with Prince William," he told the MPs. "I'm sure one day they'll get married. I have talked to him about that and he's made it clear he wants to get married." Clarence House has the temerity to disagree, insisting that "Prince William has no plans to get engaged."

8 March. The clang of wedding bells is now quite deafening, as the royal lovebirds smooch on the Alpine ski slopes. "Besotted Kate Middleton beamed with delight yesterday as boyfriend Prince William lovingly held her in his arms," drools the *Sun* royal correspondent, Duncan Larcombe. "The prince seemed keen to show the world just how he felt about his long-term girlfriend."

11 March. Another urgent bulletin from the piste. "The couple have been openly affectionate on the slopes," the *Sunday Mirror* reports, "further fuelling speculation they are about to announce their engagement."

18 March. Even the *Observer* can't ignore the story now. "William and Kate have talked about the future and intend to spend it with one another," an unnamed friend of the couple tells Oliver Marre.

14 April. The *Sun* drops its bombshell. "WORLD EXCLUSIVE: WILLS & KATE SPLIT." Photographer Arthur Edwards, implausibly billed as "a pal of them both", boasts that "I had an inkling the break-up was coming… William privately admitted to me that he didn't plan to get married until he was at least 28 – and I guess that was a clue he wasn't ready to settle down at all." How odd that Edwards didn't mention this inkling when telling MPs last month that "she's in love with Prince William. I'm sure one day they'll get married".

16 April. At last it can be told. "The *Sun* today reveals the truth behind the break-up," writes royal correspondent Duncan Larcombe. "Prince William and Kate Middleton decided to part during tearful heart-to heart talks in the Alps. Wills, 24, and Kate, 25, realised it was over during a make-or-break Swiss ski hol." Not the ski hol chronicled by Larcombe himself as an ecstatic love-in?

19 April. The new issue of *Woman's Weekly* hits the news-stands, with the coverline: "Royal Romance Exclusive! How Will and Kate's Love Survives Media Pressure." Inside, a long piece by former BBC royal correspondent Jennie Bond concludes that "Prince William and Kate Middleton's love seems to be the real thing". Shome mishtake, surely?

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

THE BRA IS 100 YEARS OLD!
1907: A FASHION HOUSE SOMEWHERE....
I'VE DONE IT
I'VE DONE IT!!!
.....I'VE INVENTED SOMETHING THAT WOMEN IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY WILL NEVER NEED!!!
EXCELLENT

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Britain in bloom: how spring is the new summer." – Michael McCarthy, *Independent*.

"Hawthorns flowering a month early and swifts returning prematurely show spring is the new summer and April is the new May, a conservation charity said today." – Press Association.

"Is spring the new summer? Is summer the old spring?" – Charles Nevin, *Independent*.

"Spring… the new summer." – *Daily Mail*.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BATON BALLS

NEWHAM council wants to expand the powers of its controversial parks "police" in frightening fashion by issuing them with long US-style batons – as seen on TV, for example, in the 1991 beating of black Los Angeles motorist Rodney King, which led to the city's worst riots since the 1960s.

The East London borough's 38-strong force of Keystone Kops may look like real policemen – they wear second-hand police uniforms, have CCTV cameras on their van and stop 'n' search suspects throughout the borough – but as *Eye* 1143 reported, they are in reality no more than minimally trained, glorified park wardens, and have no more powers to arrest, question or detain suspects than any other member of the public. The council workers' trade union, Unison, is advising its members in the parks constabulary not to carry the batons under any circumstances. Alas some of the lads are so excited at the prospect of getting their big truncheons out that they are talking of transferring to the rival GMB union, which has fewer qualms.

The law is quite clear on the matter. The Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Act of 1967 limits parks constables to the enforcement of park regulations and bye-laws. A worried Newham resident who wrote to the Department of Communities and Local Government received a reply last month which said, "we are not aware of any power which entitles park constables to carry batons... their powers are no greater than that of the ordinary man in the street". If the ordinary man in the street went around carrying such a baton, of course, he would be nicked under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 for carrying an offensive weapon "in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse".

The Labour council's elected mayor, Sir Robin Wales, of all people, should know this. In 2003 the Association of London Government (ALG), an umbrella group for all London councils, sponsored the London Local Authorities Bill, which became law in 2004. Clause 32 of the Bill sought to extend the powers of parks constables in line with those of the Met. The clause was rejected after the Home Office objected that it could lead to the "Balkanisation" of policing in London, contrary to government policy. The chairman of the ALG at the time was none other than ... Sir Robin Wales.

P.S. The man who came up with the word "Balkanisation", by the way, was none other than the then deputy commissioner of the Met, one Sir Ian Blair.

HETERO HORROR

CAMBRIDGE'S former mayor John Hipkin has been kicked out of the Lib Dems and off the city council's planning committee for the heinous crime of "heterosexism" – what the council's Lesbian, Gay and Transsexual Group (LGT) defines as "unintentional discrimination towards non-heterosexuals due to cultural bias".

At a planning meeting last year to examine an application by developers Crest Nicholson to build 408 one and two-bedroom flats outside the city, Cllr Hipkin had suggested that, er, it might be useful also to build some bigger homes, in case any of the putative residents wanted to start a family. Up went the cry: Insensitive to lesbian and gay home buyers! After an investigation by the city's Lib Dems, Hipkin was done for. His fellow councillors were sent on an "awareness course". He will not be standing at the May elections.

HACKED OFF

TESSA JOWELL likes to claim that holding the 2012 Olympics in London's East End will help regenerate rundown boroughs such as Hackney and encourage residents, particularly the yoof, to take up sport.

But is anyone in Hackney listening? Not only is the council seemingly incapable of providing anywhere to swim in the borough (*Eyes passim*), it has also achieved the remarkable own-goal of having forfeited a grant worth £3.7m from Sport England that had been earmarked for new rowing, rugby and cricket facilities at the Springhill Sports ground in Clapton.

Sport England withdrew the grant after the council failed to spend any of the allocated money, despite approval having been given back in July 2005. Not only have residents lost the chance of improved access to sports facilities; it also looks as though they will be out of pocket, as the council spent an undisclosed amount employing "consultants" to, er, find out whether having improved sports facilities was a good idea. The maximum grant now available for projects through Sport England is £500,000, and only in exceptional cases, so it is an opportunity well and truly missed.

When it comes to swimming, things are not too clever either. Hackney's new "flagship" leisure facility, the Clissold, which cost £31m to build, £24 million more than the original estimate, has been closed for more than three years because of structural problems (*Eyes* 1100 & 1145). The London Fields Lido re-opened earlier this month for a whole two weeks before closing again for further work. The Britannia pool has just re-opened after being closed for several months, as has the King's Hall pool. Alas users are already complaining that it is filthy.

MAYOR CULPA

THE Labour mayor of Warrington, Linda Dirir, devotes most of her page on the council's website to the modish themes of "environment, sustainability and climate change". "Using public transport more will help ease congestion and reduce emissions," she writes. "We have good public transport ... cycleways, greenways, school and green travel plans ... are all well developed in our town. Let's use them and also make some simple changes in our lives."

The mayor also backs the recent introduction of a strict new "decriminalised parking" regime with parking attendants dishing out £60 tickets in the cause of making Warrington's streets "safer and less congested".

Cllr Dirir is clearly a woman who likes to lead by example, as this photograph of her official car,

taken by an *Eye* reader in Cairo St, Warrington, on 3 April, demonstrates...

● **THE last *Eye* reported how Norwich city council's newly appointed press officer Lynette Alcock, who will be working alongside a colleague called Richard Balls, hopes to avoid what she terms "any Alcock and Balls hilarity" by using in future her married name – Day. However, she will also be working with one Amy Lyall, reports the *Eastern Daily Press*. Lyall-Day – now there's a PR team to inspire confidence!**

"You've got to admit it – they do *sell everything"*

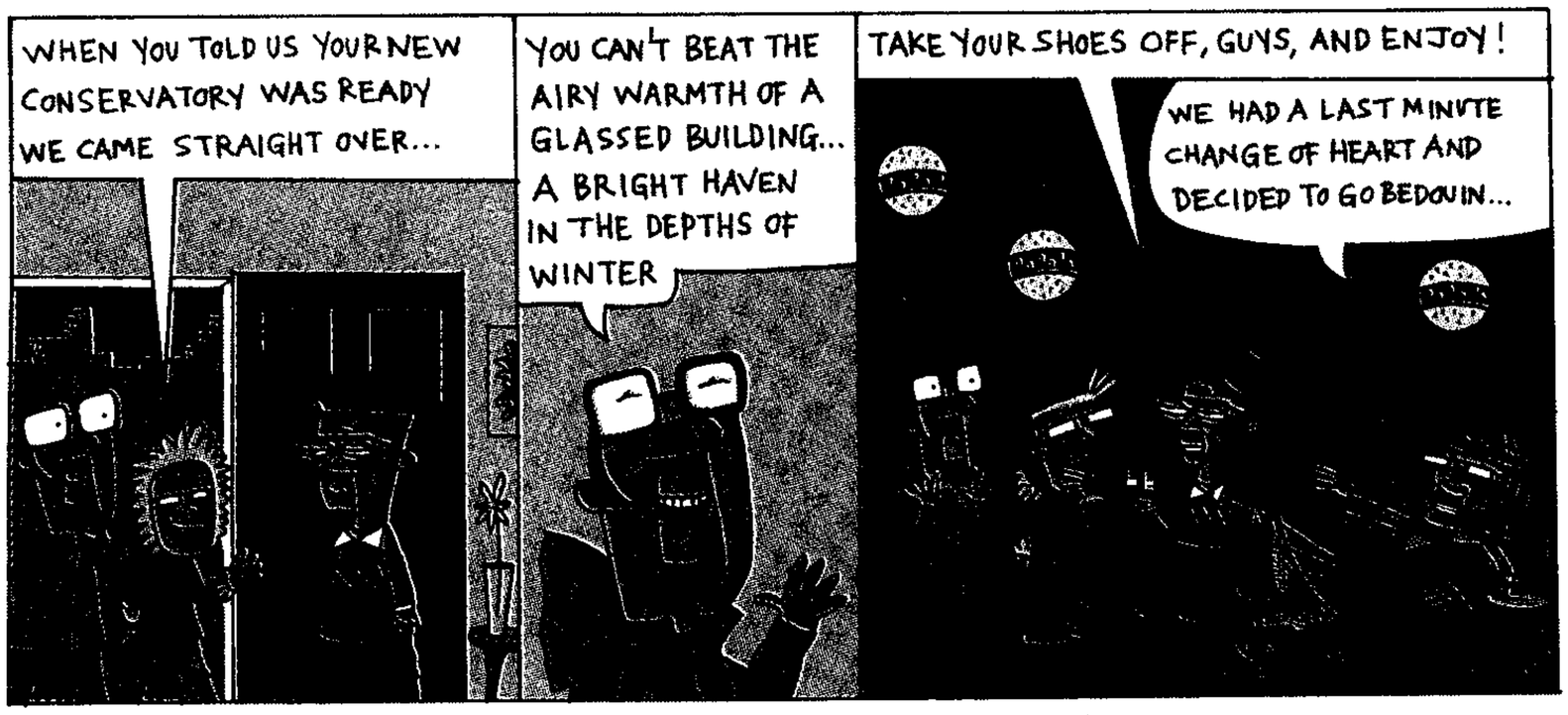
LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

TESCO shoppers are currently bombarded with the store's "Healthy Living" and "Sport for Schools" campaigns. Meanwhile, in Wales, Tesco is hoping to snap up yet another school playing field for a brand new 40,000sq ft superstore.

Monmouthshire county council is keen to oblige by selling off one of Caldicot Comprehensive School's two sports fields. The local authority has asked itself for planning permission for a food store on the site, claiming that a new supermarket is just what's needed to "anchor" the town centre and create regeneration. With planning permission, the council believes it can sell the land for £4m and Tesco has already told the local press it's interested.

But never mind, because Tesco has now created a virtual online playing field where kids can "celebrate sport" and win school vouchers.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON — KNIFE & PACKER


WHEN YOU TOLD US YOUR NEW CONSERVATORY WAS READY WE CAME STRAIGHT OVER...
YOU CAN'T BEAT THE AIRY WARMTH OF A GLASSED BUILDING... A BRIGHT HAVEN IN THE DEPTHS OF WINTER
TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF, GUYS, AND ENJOY!
WE HAD A LAST MINUTE CHANGE OF HEART AND DECIDED TO GO BEDOUIN...

NOOKS and CORNERS

ONE of the many lies peddled by modern architects is that glass is invisible. Perhaps they really believe it. But it isn't true, of course. Glass is solid; it reflects; it has to be fixed or framed; and it can be much more obtrusive than solid masonry.

The trouble is that few architects these days can handle traditional masonry – brick, stone, that sort of thing – so when they have to deal with an old building all they can think of is to reach for the glazing catalogue. And when they extend a historic building, they fill the gap between new and old with a sheet of glass under the delusion that it is invisible. The result is a junction that looks inept and painfully obtrusive. Glass is, of course, an essential element in the rhetoric of the Modern Movement, so all the poorly trained products of our architectural schools who really want to be another Richard Rogers or Norman Foster (why oh why?), even if they end up doing bathroom extensions, long to use big sheets of glass. Pathetic, really.

A great historic building now threatened with the "invisible" glass treatment is Paisley Abbey. The minister, the Rev Alan D. Birss, wants a "light glass-box structure, completing the cloister" next to the Mediaeval west end of the nave. The implication here is that it will be unobtrusive, invisible even, and so do no harm to its context. Only a plan has so far been published by Campbell & Morris Associates of Glasgow; if an elevation or perspective were produced, the people of Paisley might understand just how ugly and discordant it will be. This "new west range of cloisters" is to be a visitors' centre – in other words a shop and a restaurant, designed to make money.

Now Paisley Abbey is a very special building. Owing to Scotland's disastrous religious history, all that remained at the beginning of the 19th century was the nave – a magnificent Mediaeval structure – and a group of buildings to the south. Later in the century a restoration was begun. The long-collapsed crossing tower reappeared and, in the 1920s, a superb new choir was built, designed by the great Scots Arts and Crafts architect Sir Robert Lorimer – a work in harmony with the Mediaeval fabric but with a distinction of its own. Meanwhile, the cloister to the south of the nave was partially recreated with a grass court open to the west. The best view of the Abbey is from this angle, just where Mr Birss wants to plonk his glass box.

A painful irony is that, until the 1880s, the west side of the cloister, a partly Mediaeval two-storey masonry building, actually existed. The 3rd Marquess of Bute offered to pay for it to be restored, but Paisley malevolently chose to pull it down. So if Paisley Abbey really needs a visitors' centre (doubtful: the immediate need is the restoration of the superb but neglected organ, but the director of music and organist had to threaten to resign to get an appeal launched), the west side of the cloister should be recreated – in stone, not glass.

Could this be done? There are two problems. One is the lack of architects capable of doing what Lorimer did – producing a convincing design in a Gothic manner. But the other is the intellectually vacuous prejudice against such an approach. Mr Birss insists that Historic Scotland would never let the Abbey erect a traditional building. If true, this would be because of that widely held but dishonest misinterpretation of William Morris's dictum that, in "restoring" an ancient building, any new work should be clearly distinct from the old. But that does not mean it has to be made of glass. To anyone with an eye, Lorimer's choir is clearly not Mediaeval but a modern sophisticated essay in Gothic, so it would be perfectly possible to imagine a new west cloister, made of stone and in harmony with its Mediaeval context. But Mr Birss would rather spoil Paisley Abbey with a "light glass-box structure" that pretends it is not there.

THE same sort of ignorant modernist prejudice seems to be behind the decision by Bath Council to demolish Churchill House, a stone-faced Classical electricity building of 1931 which is an infinitely more competent and assured design than anything produced by Quinlan Terry or other of our over-praised modern Classicists, and rather more sympathetic than its proposed replacement in, yes, steel and glass. As I discussed in Eye 1123, it is to make way for a bus station designed by Wilkinson Eyre as part of the Southgate redevelopment (most of which will consist of vulgar and very much inferior new Classical facades by Chapman Taylor). But the good people of Bath are fighting back: 11,000 have signed a petition to keep Churchill House and there have been two public demonstrations against demolition. Now it has emerged that the initial proposals by the developers, Morley Fund Management, envisaged retaining most of the Churchill House facades in the new bus station – thus exploding the arguments for demolition.

So all strength to the Save Churchill House campaign – true local democracy at work. This handsome building should stay.

'Piloti'

Puncher Repairs
From £5
TYRE SALES
ALLOY WHEELS

I-SPY

Hockley, Birmingham

Submitted by Karl Williams.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs)

It's still nowhere near wacky enough - Give that 'randomise' programme another tweak!
ACME ARCHITECTS
TOWN CENTRE PLAN
HUNTER

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

FOR YEARS now we've been happily importing orchestras and opera companies from the former Soviet territories, and because they're cheap (sometimes they're even good) they have become a feature of performing life. From the National Opera of Chisinau to the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, the Bolshoi and the Kirov, many a festival and regional venue has come to depend on them.

But maybe not for much longer. As from the beginning of this month, HM Government has massively increased the cost of visas required by incoming artists from such countries, from £34 (as it used to be) to £85 (as it became more recently) and now to £200. The fee is levied per person, over and above the group working permit for a visiting ensemble, which means it can now quite easily cost £20,000 for an orchestra to enter the UK, £40,000 for an opera company.

These fees are unaffordable to most former Soviet companies, so they'll presumably stop coming. If we thought America had the monopoly on arts-oppressive visa systems, we were wrong; where Mr Bush leads, Mr Blair soon catches up.

NORMAN LEBRECHT, columnist of the Evening Standard, has made a pleasant career for himself over the past decade as classical music's self-appointed Cassandra, relentlessly peddling the same story that the end is nigh, the game is lost, the chips are down etc etc.

And it's all there again in his new book, which purports to be a serious examination of the decline and fall of the classical recording industry but is largely a self-congratulatory reflection on how Norman Told You So.

But there was an interesting backlash the other week when Lebrecht went touting his book in a talk at the British Library Sound Archive. Unfortunately for poor Norman, he found himself addressing an audience that actually knew something about the history of classical recording. And when it was over they assailed the library with documented complaints about his poor grasp of the subject. As one angry letter giving chapter and verse put it: "Why is BL promoting a badly written book by a badly informed writer and letting him puff it with an inaccurate lecture?... I feel you have been duped."

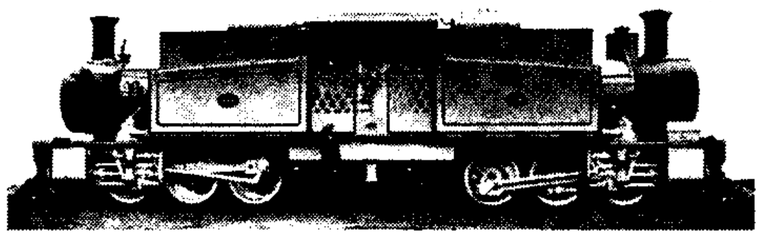
'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

The world's gone Warhol mad! Three British shows this Summer, all those films about him, his paintings smashing records at auction...
Why couldn't he just be famous for 15 minutes?

SIGNAL FAILURES



Standing ovation

MINISTERS who have ignored overcrowding on English trains will suffer no electoral backlash: figures obtained by the *Eye* confirm that trains in their own constituencies are rarely overcrowded.

The nearest thing to overcrowding in transport secretary Douglas Alexander's constituency (Paisley & Renfrewshire South) is that 30 people, or 10 per carriage, stand for 11 minutes from Paisley Gilmour Street to Glasgow on one morning train. Another train from Paisley has 66 standing, 11 per carriage – but only from Cardonald, eight minutes from Glasgow. In January Alexander's chief rail mandarin said English commuters should expect to stand for 30 minutes, even if they paid £5,000 for a season ticket, because providing enough capacity would cost too much.

Rail minister Tom Harris reckons it's "not realistic" for commuters to expect seats. Unless, presumably, they live in his Glasgow South constituency. There are no passengers "over capacity" on the Cathcart-Glasgow line, according to the Scottish Executive's 2005-6 data. That means there are seats to spare all day, as Scottish officials equate seats to capacity. (Around London a train's capacity is its seats and another 35 percent to reflect standing spaces.) On another route, Glasgow to Pollokshaws West, passengers stand on some evening peak trains but the journey only takes nine minutes.

Chancellor Gordon Brown is partly responsible for English commuters' misery. To keep rail borrowing off his books, he's continued the Tories' fragmented rail structure which adds huge extra costs; and to reduce rail's burden on the Treasury, new English franchises have dumped trains (*Eyes passim*) and made overcrowding even worse.

Fortunately no trains have been dumped from Brown's Kirkcaldy & Cowdenbeath constituency. The Scottish Executive says that on the Kirkcaldy-Edinburgh line, nobody has to stand on any trains during the week. On the Edinburgh-Cowdenbeath line 23 passengers stand on one evening train, but only for 11 minutes, and on one morning train to Edinburgh 92 people, 15.3 per carriage, stand for 15 minutes.

Edinburgh and Glasgow are much smaller than London and have fewer commuters, but English overcrowding isn't confined to London trains. Campaigners at Transport 2000 say the most overcrowded train in England and Wales goes from Durham to Newcastle. The group's overcrowding top 10 also names Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Cardiff, Manchester and Birmingham. According to recent official figures, 82 percent of southbound morning peak trains leaving Bolton already have standing passengers, although Bolton is more than 20 minutes from Manchester.

Rolling-stock still

SOME relief is on the way for Thameslink passengers after the announcement this month that 48 carriages will transfer from Southern. But they'll only get back trains built for Thameslink in the 1980s and later moved to Southern's predecessor; the deal doesn't provide for the extra Thameslink passengers since the 1980s.

The transfer can't happen until new carriages are built for Southern, so the full 48 won't reach Thameslink until December 2008. Meanwhile 120 comfortable 1988-built carriages remain idle after South West Trains discarded them. Some could have moved to Southern and released all 48 Thameslink carriages in February.

The decision to order new trains for Southern rather than use idle ones undermines the Tory concept of rolling-stock leasing companies, or Roscos, owning the trains. This is typical of "new" Labour's schizophrenia on Roscos; it wants them (to keep borrowing off Treasury balance sheets) but instigated a competition inquiry over their leasing charges.

When setting charges for new trains, Roscos, which are owned by banks, estimate commercial risks over the trains' 30-year design life. The withdrawal of hundreds of carriages 10 years or more before their 30th anniversaries is a double whammy for Roscos: the trains earn nothing but are the wrong shape to lease or sell in mainland Europe; and how long today's new trains will stay in service is more uncertain. It would only be natural for Roscos to inflate lease charges for new trains, to reflect higher risks and recoup the outlay before the trains could be dumped prematurely.

A rolling-stock strategy would make the railways cheaper and less overcrowded, but there's still no sign of one after 10 years of "new" Labour.

'Dr B Ching'

"Oi! Are you lookin' at my bard??!"

Letters

Private Eye

Good in the Sachs

Sir,

I was sad to see that once again in your rush to condemn a good man in his efforts to save the world, you have become over-eager and ended up rather missing the point. In your article about the supposedly "farcical" scenes in the run up to the first episode of the Reith lectures that were broadcast on Wednesday 11th April (could you not have at least waited until it had actually aired before you unleashed your bile?) you seemed to think that it was of some significance that Professor Jeffrey Sachs turned up without a script. Well, if that's the case, then you can't deny that he was bloody good. He spoke eloquently and expertly, and was brilliant at defending himself against his critics. The man probably didn't need a script – he knows what he's talking about, as anyone who has read his superb book 'The End of Poverty' will be aware.

Also, although as a 17-year-old I found it deeply patronising that the BBC felt that they needed to bring an ex-Spice Girl into the Royal Society in an effort to be more "appealing" to youngsters (frankly, it's a sign of how deluded they are if they think many young people would purposely get up for 9am during the Easter holidays in order to listen to R 4 in the first place, not to mention the fact that most of us vehemently deny that we ever liked the Spice Girls) one must admit, grudgingly, that Halliwell did make some good points – particularly on the importance of grassroots development in Africa.

She contributed more to the debate than your beloved Christopher Meyer, particularly as one can't help wondering why he would turn up purely to tell Sachs that he had learned nothing new.

Maybe you should be less presumptuous. But otherwise, keep up the good work.

Regards,
MADDY FRY,
Thame, Oxfordshire.

Armchair zero

Sir,

I normally enjoy, and agree with, "Remote Controller" but what on earth was he trying to prove with his diatribe about "The Mark of Cain"?

Anyone with half a brain would imagine that those in Iraq who wish to make it difficult for British troops would seize upon this TV production and use the graphic scenes of ill-treatment of Iraqi civilians to whip up further agitation, without bothering with the niceties of "balance", as shown in the references to the fear and pressures experienced by the squaddies.

It's all very well for Remote Controller to act the "armchair warrior" (and I presume his main intention was to attack the attempt at censorship) but he'd do better to read, instead, Richard Holmes' recent book, "Dusty Warriors", which tells it how it is in Iraq, and how Britain's modern army has to cope. He might feel slightly more humble and concerned for our young people, serving their country whether it's right or wrong, and he might feel it quite reasonable to try to limit the amount of ill-will which artistic licence can so easily provoke.

As Kipling so eloquently put it,

"…. it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' chuck 'im out, the brute;

But it's saviour of 'is country when the guns begin to shoot..."

Nothing changes!

Yours faithfully,
JACK SMITH,
Lindal-in-Furness, Cumbria.

O·B·N

"Moss has never lost that mischievous air and remains at the centre of all that is cool in pop culture, equally at home watching a band in a grungy pub as in the front row at the shows. She is someone who has always appeared supremely comfortable in her own skin, sexy without being self obsessed or intimidating and still, despite her fame, somehow accessible. "

SHERYL GARRATT on Kate Moss
Sunday Times Style section

Submitted by John Alexander

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Joke ant-ipathy

Sir,

Eye1182. Cartoon on page 6.

Gosh ! There was I thinking that the death of over one hundred British soldiers serving in Iraq was no laughing matter.

I was glad therefore, to be nudged in the direction of humour by the cartoon in Eye 1182 which was clever enough to compare a picnicking couple (being approached by explosive bearing ants) gasping "Oh no insurge-ants" with the miserable reality of those who face the possibility of a face to face with their maker, at a time not of their choosing, in Iraq sometime soon.

Sure, death and/or injury is an occupational hazard for anyone who opts to be in the front line, I'm not sure however that it merits a feeble cartoon based on even more dismal wordplay. The stench of midnight oil reeks from the attempt.

All's fair in love and war they say.

Well done guys. You've just proven the exception.

Am I allowed to say that this was beyond satire and of very lax editorial judgement? I'm sure that that it's difficult to please all of the people all of the time, but for gawd's sake, apply a bit of common sense...

FRANK DE PELLETTE,

Greenhithe, Kent.

Pat judgement

Sir,

In a recent edition, Pseuds Corner included a piece by Patti Smith. I found this extract profound, even moving. In fact, I'm grateful to you for bringing it to my attention. Simply because someone uses a simile or metaphor, it doesn't automatically mean they're being pretentious. It's a short step from healthy scepticism to unhappy philistinism, and I suppose it's inevitable that sometimes you'll take that step. Never mind.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
KEITH HANCOCK,

Via email.

Hogg-wash

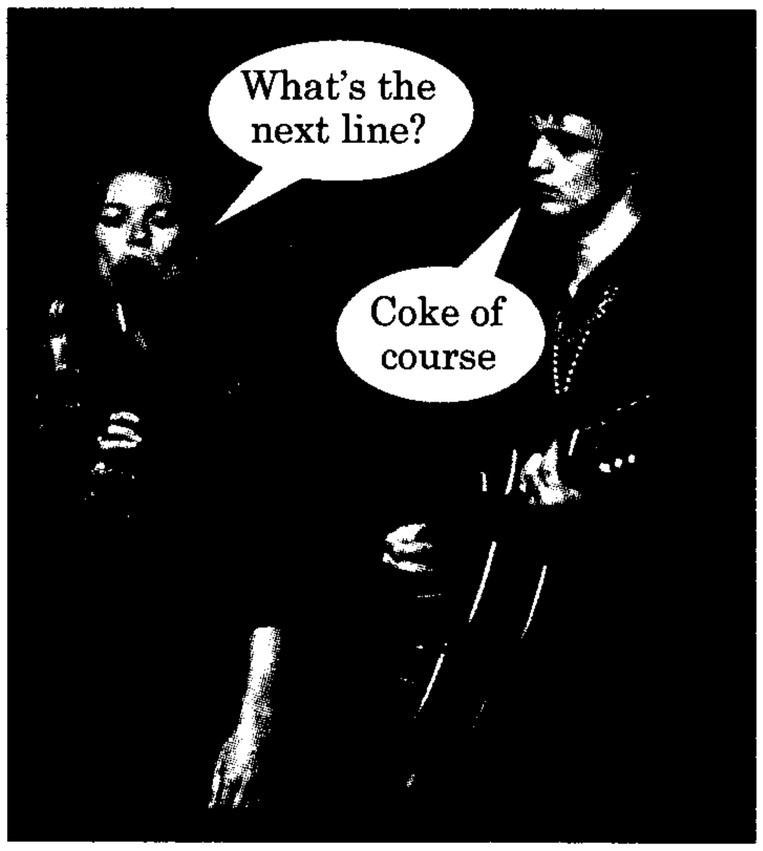
Sir,

Sorry, but I have to challenge James Hogg's claim to have been the subject of the UK's original 'reality TV' show. I do remember his 'castaway' adventure – and fascinating it was, too – but I seem to recall that the first 'fly on the wall' series to be acknowledged as such was BBC's 'The Family', which aired in 1974. Compulsive viewing of goings-on in the wilds of Reading, narrated (I think) by the late Desmond Wilcox.

See – I'm not getting out enough, even after all these years...

Yours,
COLIN GALE,

Via email.



Soothslayer

Sir,

Eye 1182 p. 11:

"... the BBC was refusing to repeat Ian Curteis's 1981 drama The Falklands Play as part of this year's commemorations..."

If Ian Curteis wrote The Falklands Play in 1981, you might not think much of his politics but you have to admire his foresight...

BRIAN SPURRELL,

Via email.

Sir,

You were right, in 'Media News' (Eye 1182), to mock a Mail columnist for his silly article on the BBC's "Falklands Play".

Both of you missed the point, though. The play was broadcast at the time of the recent 25th anniversary. On Saturday, 7 April. On Radio 4.

Yours faithfully,
FRED CRAWFORD,

Ellon, Aberdeenshire.

Scenes You Seldom See

"Michelle just phoned to say she has been sick all night and is feeling really rough, but she's coming into work anyway"

Goble-degook

Sir,

Rev. Chris Goble writes in Issue 1182 regarding Liverpool Cathedral and its new cafe bar. Let me respond to Rev. Goble's comments.

1. I have no objection to the provision of restaurants in cathedrals. I am well aware of the Christian tradition/ministry of hospitality. The Refectory in Liverpool Cathedral continues to be the main eating area, but as it is self-contained and basically sound-proof, it poses no threat to either the architectural integrity or sacred ambiance of the rest of the building. (However, its recent "refurbishment" which included replacing the unique and architecturally sympathetic circular light wood tables and matching semi-circular chairs with what can only be described as "chip shop furniture" is another story altogether!)

2. I did object to the new Mezzanine Cafe Bar primarily with regard to its opening hours on a Sunday which clashed with Choral Evensong. However since my letter to Liverpool Cathedral Life, the Liverpool Echo and The Daily Telegraph, the Mezzanine Cafe Bar is now closed at 2.30pm on a Sunday, some 30 minutes before Evensong. The preacher, choir, organist and congregation no longer have to compete with the inevitably noisy and distracting sound of chatting customers and cutlery and crockery being collected and/or dropped!

3. I did object to "screaming children" being allowed to run amok in the cathedral during Evensong as they were the unsupervised offspring of visitors to the building and not worshippers. Provision can always be made for children during worship, if their parents are indeed participating in worship.

I wonder if we would have the gospel accounts today of the Sermon on the Mount if Jesus' hearers had been totally distracted by "screaming children" and the sound of a fully functioning open-air eatery? A point to ponder Rev. Goble!

REVEREND ALAN R. KENNEDY,

Allerton, Liverpool.

Brown's sugar

Sir,

According to the BBC's own web site, the closeness of its new Trust's chairman to Gordon Brown is causing concern (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6526001.stm).

Curiously, an anagram of Sir Michael Lyons is: 'He is all cronyism'.

It seems some things never change.

Yours,
MICK TULLY,

Northolt, Middlesex.

Anti-semantic

Sir,

Having read Mira Bar-Hillel's letter (issue 1182) correcting Richard Desmond's definition of the Yiddish word "Schnorrer", I feel that I have to be pedantic and pick her up on her knowledge of the Yiddish language.

Mira is, in fact, only half right. The word "Schnorrer" which is also a German word, traditionally means a beggar, but has since taken on a much more commonly-used meaning. In modern-day Yiddish, a schnorrer is a freeloader – ie someone who comes round your house for dinner, doesn't bring any wine, ponces cigarettes from you all night and leaves with a roll of toilet paper hidden in their coat pocket. I feel qualified in saying this, as I am surrounded by the buggers.

Yours pedantically,
MIKE CHARALAMBOUS,

Hove, East Sussex.

Lookalike

Mobutu

Paisley

Sir,

I wonder if there is any relationship between the Northern Ireland First Minister-in-waiting (maybe), and the dictator of Zaire? Or is it just their sense in fashion?

KAIN DARKWOLF,

Via email.

Lost in the post

Sir,

While discussing messageboard restrictions, your resident musician Lunchtime O'Boulez asserts (Eye 1181) that "no other BBC station limits its messageboards in this way. Indeed most encourage free and general discussion – only Radio 3 bans it".

Au contraire. The Radio 4 Today board is far worse. Contributors may only post (after moderation) on increasingly asinine subjects raised by 'hosts', allegedly Today production staff but more likely to be meedja studies students on job placements.

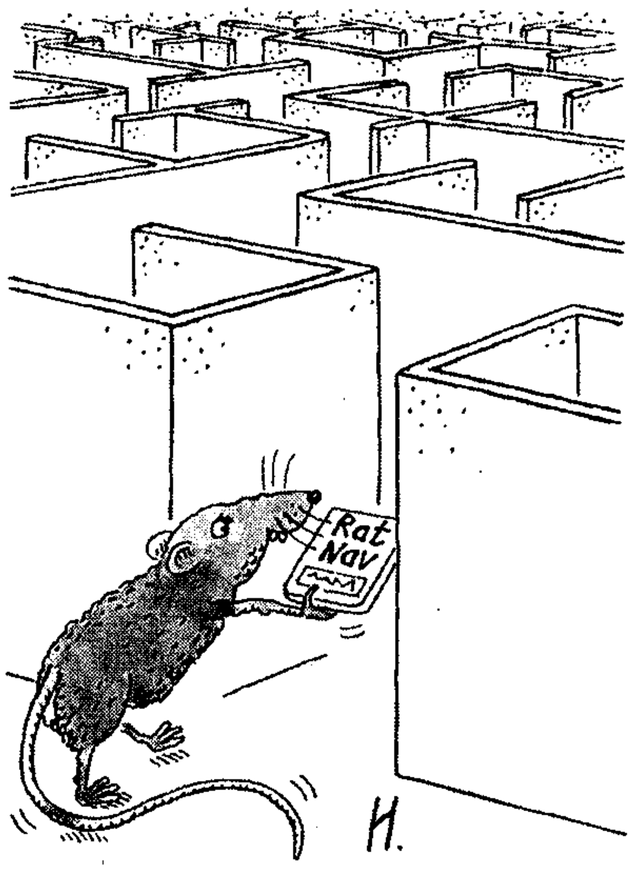
Still it safely avoids any embarrassing posts on the subject of BBC accountability or criticism of the government.

Recent gems include: 'how do you tie a scarf?', cookery, school uniform sizes, and homework for Under 11s.

Cutting edge stuff.

Yours,
DAMON KNIGHT,

Bristol.



Pass muster

Sir,

Having one's novel rejected is always the pits, but the phrase "I couldn't quite muster up enough enthusiasm" (Eye 1181) applied to my previous novel (still unpublished – alas probably deservedly so). It came from a well-known publishing house, and was one of thirty-six rejection letters, several of which used similar wording. A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainan was indeed rejected by a reader at PFD, but not Pat Kavanagh.

Yours rejectedly,
MARINA LEWYCKA,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

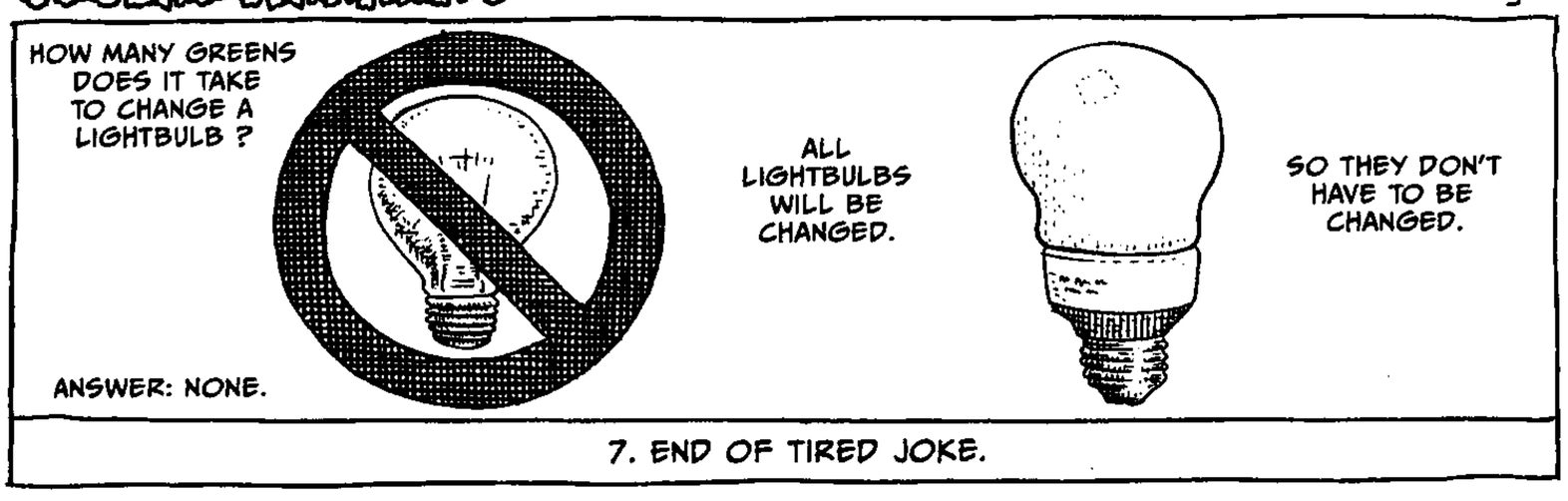
"He [Cristiano Ronaldo] bears comparison with George Best – the incomparable George Best."
DAVID PLEAT
(Andy Bruno)

"They've found a chink in the jigsaw..."
DR HILLARY JONES, GMTV
(Gareth Kinnear)

"The new West Stand casts a giant shadow over the entire pitch, even on a sunny day."
CHRIS JONES, Evening Standard
(Mick Tully)

"Cambridge have won the Boat Race. Oxford were second."
GEOFF TWENTYMAN, BBC Radio Bristol
(Jim Horler)

"It is a dogfight and when you go into those you have to fight like dogs."
CHRIS COLEMAN, BBC Sport website
(Darren Burns)


GLOBAL WARMING THE PLUS SIDE
AJP
HOW MANY GREENS DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHTBULB ?
ANSWER: NONE.
ALL LIGHTBULBS WILL BE CHANGED.
SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE CHANGED.
7. END OF TIRED JOKE.

SOLUTIONS

"Don's Garage Doors, specialists in garage door solutions" – *garage doors*

"Neat Ideas Premium Archiving Solutions" – *cardboard boxes*

"Capita Learning & Development: a rapidly evolving learning business providing end to end learning solutions to the private and public sector" – *training*

"Clinique Tailored skin solutions" – *moisturisers*

"Morgan Stanley Global Infrastructure Solutions Division" – *IT department*

"Assemblies of God Church (Derby Hall) Solution Centre" – *church*

All submitted by readers

Rabid stew

Sir,

Is there really no end to Piloti's rabid loathing and detestation of Norman Foster and Richard Rogers? It would be tempting to think of the whole as a gigantic piss take but, sadly, I just don't think Piloti has the required sense of humour or, indeed, any sense of humour at all.

Therefore, taking it at face value, this would normally be regarded as the invective one would perhaps reserve for the likes of Hitler, A, Stalin, J, or Milosevic, S, but for Pete's sake Piloti is supposed to be dealing with architects, not mass murderers.

Does he seriously put Foster and Rogers in that category? I think we should be told, otherwise Piloti is guilty not only of the kind of rabid fanaticism unimaginable to Al Qaeda or the Taliban but also of economy with the truth.

All the best,
TIM HALL,

Via email.

Shore thing

Sir,

Doesn't the reviewer of "On Chesil Beach" know that a work can only have one protagonist?

Yours etc,
ROGER CHARLTON,

Via email.

Phasers to stun!

Sir,

Forgive the use of my anorak, but may I correct Dafydd ap Thomas (Letters, Eye 1182). According to the Star Trek: The Next Generation Technical Manual the warp scale is logarithmic, and a ship travelling at Warp Factor 10 would pass through every point in the universe simultaneously. This is impossible (of course!) since the energy needed to achieve this is infinite. The Enterprise-D had a top speed of around warp 9.6, although this varied a little through the series.

Regards,
PHIL EVANS,

X-ray and Observational Astronomy Group, University of Leicester.

Additional police on the streets to cut crime committed by Lib Dems

Lib Dem Penicuik Gazette

Letter from **Monaco**

from Our Own Correspondent

TO PARAPHRASE a view oft expressed by the folk of Edinburgh about the rival west coast city of Glasgow, the best thing to come out of Monaco is the train to Nice.

Monaco is the most boring place on earth. It might just get away with it if it had equally uninteresting neighbours. But with Nice to the right, Italy to the left and Corsica sort of opposite, Monaco doesn't stand a chance – although last year we did find a dead woman in a lift.

Take cars. On the front page of *Nice-Matin* last November we had a spectacular picture of Suleyman Kerimov and a Ferrari Enzo (both parts of it, with a considerable gap between the two) following the Russian's accident on the Promenade des Anglais in the company of Tina Kandelaki (we got a pretty spectacular photo of her, too). Monaco? In early February of this year we read that Scottish Formula I driver and Monegasque resident David Coulthard had been fined €500 for an incident in his Mercedes which took place in – 1999. It appears Coulthard either suggested or was asked to drive round the F1 circuit around 5am after an evening with friends in a nightclub. No pictures.

Take casinos. For the past few weeks, in Nice they've been following the retrial of the chappie accused of murdering Agnes Le Roux, daughter of the then owner of the Palais de la Méditerranée casino in Nice. She and her car disappeared in 1977 and have never been seen since. Monaco? The Société des Bains de Mers, owner of the casino and just about everything else that makes money in the principality, "nationalised" by Prince Rainier III in 1966, might launch an online casino.

No, the only excitement in Monaco is generated by the ruling family. Even then the Grimaldis manage to take most of the fun out of it. We have illegitimate children crawling out of the woodwork here. The present incumbent, Prince Albert II, whose proclivities have been discussed ad infinitum in the press, has admitted paternity of two illegitimate children. In 2005 he recognised his son, born in 2003, following a relationship with an air hostess. Last year he acknowledged the existence of a daughter born to a Californian visitor to a Monaco tennis tournament in 1991.

This is a family trait. Prince Albert I was succeeded by his son Louis II in 1922. Louis, known as the Soldier Prince, had a daughter Charlotte born out of wedlock in 1898 to artiste Marie-Juliette Louvet in French Algeria. Louis had no legitimate heirs. To avoid the possibility of the succession passing to a German cousin, Charlotte, born Louvet, was recognised by him in 1900 and took the surname Grimaldi. Next she was known as Mademoiselle de Valentinois; then she became Her Serene Highness Hereditary Princess of Monaco and was promoted to Duchess de Valentinois; and, finally, Her Serene Highness Princess Charlotte of Monaco. A meteoric rise through the Grimaldi heraldry, but when needs must…

Charlotte married Pierre, Count of Polignac, who was royally decreed to change his name to Grimaldi. In 1923 she gave birth to the future Rainier III and gave up her right to the Monegasque throne in favour of her son.

Charlotte was, by all accounts, a bit of a goer. Her behaviour was such that her son despatched her off to an estate near Paris where she took up prison visiting. Thus she met jewel thief René Girier, also known as René la Canne, who, despite the eloquent pleas of his female barrister Mme Dubreuil, was serving time. When Rainier married Grace Kelly in 1956, Princess Charlotte attended the wedding. Girier invited his barrister and her husband to Charlotte's home at St Jean Cap Ferrat. It was the last time she set foot in Monaco.

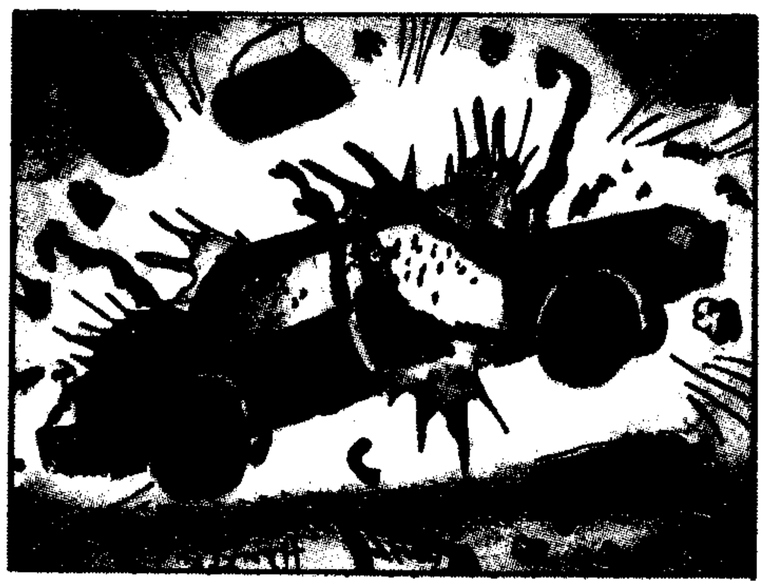
Princess Stéphanie has done her best to add a bit of colour – a daughter out of wedlock with her ex-bodyguard, a liaison with an elephant trainer, a brief marriage to a Portuguese trapeze artist. But our hopes for relief from terminal boredom must rest with Prince Albert II. Most shops on the Rock have official pictures of him. We like him. He seems like a nice chap – the Soldiering On Prince. Go Albert, go.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "My brand new Honda Prelude was parked in the driveway," sixteen-year-old Jayme Edmonds told reporters in Rotorua, "and I went outside to sit in it, just before midnight, to listen to the stereo. As I sat there, I noticed some paint stains on the inside door and dashboard, so I began rubbing at them with a towel. I didn't have any furniture polish, but there were two cans of Lynx deodorant in the back, so I began spraying those onto the marks, to help me clean them away. After a while, I sat back to listen to the music, and lit a cigarette. Next thing I knew, there was a big ball of fire, a huge explosion, everything went white, and I ended up in intensive care, attached to an oxygen machine."

Jayme's mother later explained what had happened. "The Lynx aerosol cans had been



in the hot sun all day, and Jayme's cigarette must have ignited the fumes. Both doors were blown completely away, the windows smashed to dust, and the windscreen was found at the other end of the road. The explosion also shattered two windows in my husband's van, which was parked nearby and, somewhat embarrassingly, woke up the entire neighbourhood. Jayme told me that after the explosion, he tried to pick up a towel to save his stereo, but then realised that the towel was on fire. So was his hair. That's when he knew it was serious."

A spokesman for Unilever Australasia pointed out that "the deodorant cans are clearly marked 'highly flammable'. Lynx is designed to attract members of the opposite sex, but not in this way. We hope the young man is not too seriously hurt." *(New Zealand Herald, 19/2/07. Spotter: David Green)*

– ● –

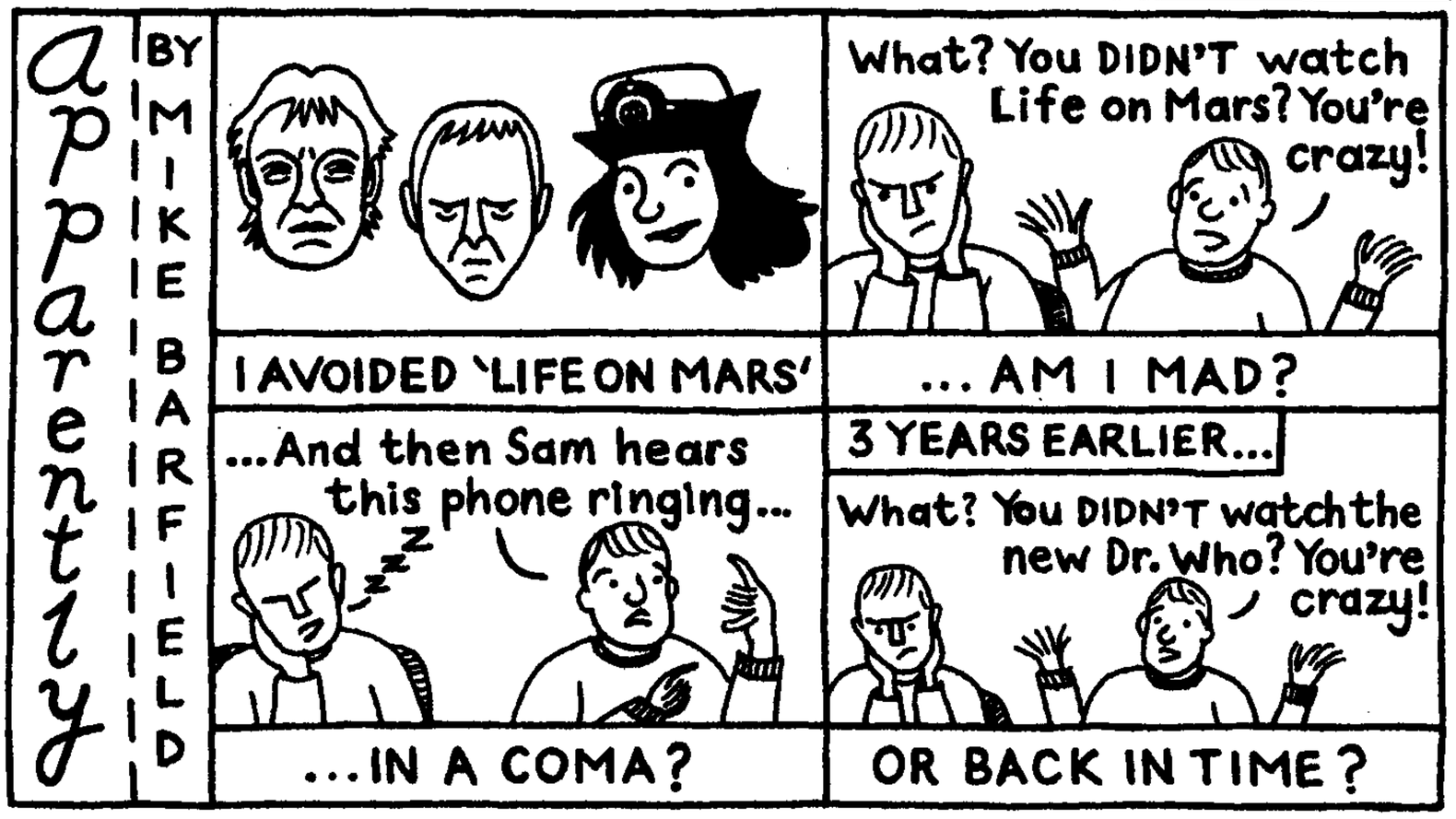
● *"Prisoners often use their bodies to conceal weapons or narcotics," Alberto Uribe of the El Salvador prison service told reporters at Gotera prison, "but this is the first time we've found a grenade in somebody's rectum. It was a V40 fragmentation grenade, and we found it with our scanner during a security clampdown, along with sixteen mobile phones which had been swallowed by other inmates. We suspect that a mass escape attempt was imminent, and that the grenade would have been used to threaten the guards, or blow a hole in the prison wall.*

"We're prepared to wait a day or two for these objects to come out naturally, but if they aren't expelled normally, we'll have to perform surgery to remove them. Last year, my colleagues at La Esperanza-Mariona prison found an M67 grenade in the vagina of a female visitor. That's quite common, but you don't usually find anything as big as a V40 in a rectum. It's almost an impossible fit." (KGET News [California], 5/3/07. Spotter: Alan Wheatley)

– ● –

● "New Mexico has one of the highest rates of alcohol-related traffic deaths in the nation," S.U. Mahesh of the state's Transportation Department told a press conference in Rio Rancho. "They're nearly all men, and we're hoping that these talking urinal cakes will help reduce the statistics. The last place a driver usually goes before he leaves a bar is the men's room, and when he steps up to the urinal, a motion-sensitive plastic device in the cake switches on, and a flirty woman's voice speaks to him. 'Hey, big boy,' she says, 'having a few drinks? Think you had one too many big boy? Then it's time to call a cab or a sober friend for a ride home. Remember, your future is in your hand.' In restrooms, guys don't chitchat with other guys, and they don't expect a woman's voice either, so we've got their full attention for 10 or 15 seconds."

Customers at the Turtle Mountain bar, where the devices are being tested, were impressed by the talking urinal cakes. "It startled me the first time I heard it," said regular Ben Miller, "but it sure got my attention. It's a fantastic idea, because it makes you think, 'maybe I should call the wife to come get me'." *(Newark [N.J.] Star-Ledger, 16/2/07. Spotter: Anita Daniel)*


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
I AVOIDED 'LIFE ON MARS'
What? You DIDN'T watch Life on Mars? You're crazy!
... AM I MAD?
...And then Sam hears this phone ringing...
3 YEARS EARLIER...
What? You DIDN'T watch the new Dr. Who? You're crazy!
...IN A COMA?
OR BACK IN TIME?

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And you won't be hearing many more of those from me, will you?

Anyway, you should all by now have received your voting forms for next month's PCC elections (how quickly that's come round again!).

And I won't pretend that things are likely to go well for my team!

In fact, it's probably going to be a bit of a disaster!

But hey, should we be surprised at that?

After all, when someone has been the successful leader of a team for many years and decides – very much in his own time – to step down, is it any wonder that people want to express their unhappiness?

When the shepherd decides that it is time to leave his flock, they're hardly going to be too keen just to follow meekly behind the deputy shepherd, are they?

Especially if he's someone they don't particularly like or trust!

So we shouldn't be surprised if the sheep show their disappointment and frustration by looking around for someone they can give a good kicking!

Which unfortunately spells rather bad news for that deputy shepherd, whoever that may be!

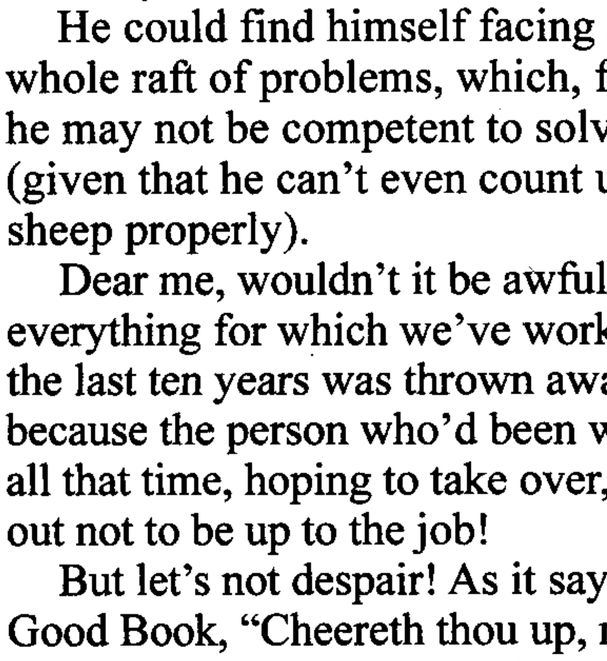
He could find himself facing a whole raft of problems, which, frankly, he may not be competent to solve (given that he can't even count up the sheep properly).

Dear me, wouldn't it be awful if everything for which we've worked for the last ten years was thrown away, all because the person who'd been waiting all that time, hoping to take over, turned out not to be up to the job!

But let's not despair! As it says in the Good Book, "Cheereth thou up, matey. It may never happen" *(Book of Cliches, 14.22)*.

Because, you know, our prayers may just be answered!

Cast your mind back to those



The vicar and his reluctant protegé David!! As seen by local artist Mr De La Nougerede

unforgettable days ten years ago, when I arrived at the vicarage.

All seemed lost! The parish was cast down in despair.

Yet what were the principles we stood for in those days, which gave the parish back hope, and set it on its way to such prosperity and success?

Above all, we stood for youth! For change! For something new and fresh! For a rejection of the old ways, and of people who'd been around for far too long!

And isn't that what we need today?

I've been inspired by reading again that wonderful biblical story about how, when things were looking really bad for the "Children of Israel", there appeared in their midst, as if from nowhere, a young man of whom no one had ever heard before.

His eyes were shiny with the promise of a new age, where he would lead them into the promised land!

And do you know what the name of that young man was?

He was called David!

Makes you think, doesn't it?

Do read the story if you've got a spare moment!

Yours,

Tony

Coming Soon!!

Mr Brown has told us we have to serialise the new pamphlet he has written, in which he describes his heroes from history. So here goes!

1. Robert the Bruce. Robert was a great British leader who was known above all for his patience. For years and years he sat in his dungeon, waiting for his moment to come, and watching the antics of a nasty little spider which ran up and down getting nowhere.

Eventually, the spider decided to retire, and Robert became King!

Next week: Gordon tells the story of Gordon of Khartoum, who brought peace to Africa.

"Order your copy now!"
says Mr Brown.

Confession Corner

What a fine example was set by Mr Des Browne, with his confession during Evensong over his recent mess-up concerning the Sea Cadets.

He was clearly moved as he told the congregation, "I have done nothing wrong, but if some people choose to think I have, then that's their problem".

Thank you, Des, for your courage and honesty in not admitting that you had done anything wrong! T.B.

ST ALBION'S MARATHON

Congratulations to everyone who took part in the marathon (except for Mr Brown who isn't any good at running!!! No offence Gordon!!)

And a special congratulations to myself for completing the course in a record 10 years, two days, seven hours and 27 minutes!!!!

T.B.

To Remember In Your Prayers

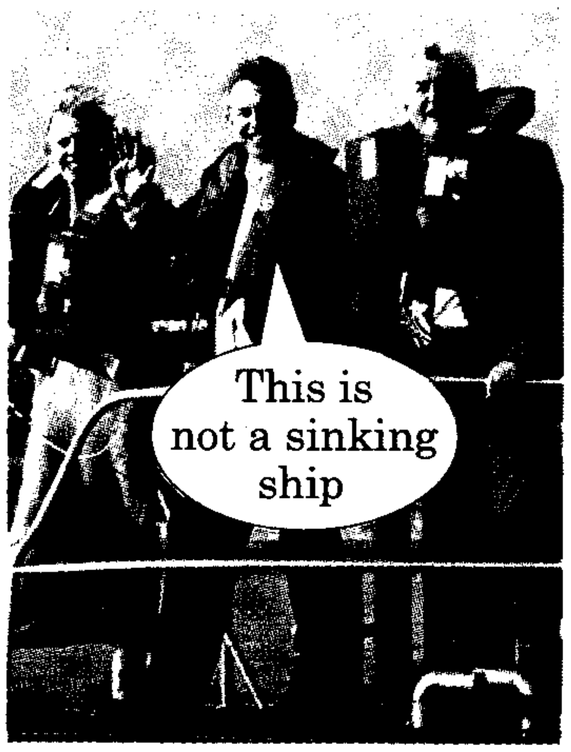
MR GOLDSMITH

● At long last PC Yates has given in his so-called report on me which runs to 265 pages!! Goodness me I'm sorry for my friend Mr Goldsmith, having to plough through it, but it will be up to him to decide whether any further legal action needs to be taken.

Let me assure eveyone that my very good friend Mr Goldsmith is a paragon of impartiality and he will come to his decision simply on the basis of the evidence presented to him. We can all be confident that my very, very, very, very, very, good friend Mr Goldsmith will carefully weigh up the merits of PC Yates's investigations before concluding that there is no case for me to answer!

T.B.

LABOUR PARTY SHOCK



NEW TORY MANIFESTO IN FULL

1. **People must behave better.**
2. **If everybody was nicer then the world would be much nicer.**
3. **Er...**
4. **Toodle-pip.**

THE Sun SAYS

THE Sun has discovered a new evil website called "Wikipedia" which we know for a fact to be spreading filth throughout the internet. We say "Shut this wicked paedo website down NOW!"

On Other Pages

News In Pants: Page 3's Mandy says, "I was disgusted to see Wikipedia had recorded my statistics as 36-18-36. In fact they are 48-3-22. "

What Name Do You Think the Ex-Spice Girl Baby Should Have Been Given?

You choose from the following showbiz alternatives:

① Sunblest Aerosol
② Lemon Fresh Weetabix
③ Grapefruit Segment Dettol
④ Sir Peregrine Worsthorne
⑤ Full English Breakfast
⑥ Bluebell Madonna Halliwell

MILIBAND – WILL HE STAND EVEN THOUGH HE SAYS HE WON'T?

by All Political Correspondents

AFTER WEEKS of uncertainty when Labour hopeful David Miliband insisted he would not stand against Gordon Brown, David Miliband finally came off the fence and said he would not stand against Gordon Brown.

But this only served to increase speculation about his future. Last night the Westminster rumour-mill was buzzing. Said one insider, "All along Miliband has said he is not going to stand. But now he says he is not going to stand. What are we supposed to make of that?"

The insider continued," Either he doesn't stand or he doesn't stand. Surely it's time for him to make a definitive statement."

On Other Pages

Will He Or Won't He give us something to write about? **p2-94**

Nursery Times

Friday, April 27, 2007

DYKE WHITTINGTON SAYS NO

by Our London Staff **Walter de la Mayor**

MR DYKE Whittington shocked Nurseryland yesterday by refusing to "turn again" and become Mayor, going home instead.

Dyke had set out with his faithful rat, Roland, to seek fame and fortune in London whose pavements he had been told were paved with crap (surely gold? Ed.).

Along the way he met a strange young man called Dave who promised him that he could be Mayor of London. All he had to do was defeat the evil Red Ken and his trusty newt.

Puss-In-Newts

Dyke, however, took one look at the silky-tongued old Etonian in his cycling helmet and told him, "Cut the crap. You must be joking. I've got loadsamoney, what do I want a headache for, etc. etc."

Whereupon Dyke turned upon his heels and the bells of

London cried out:

Phew that was close
He's already dumbed down the BBC
And London's dumb enough as it is.

(Is this right? Ed.)

On other pages

Cinderella too common for Prince Charming, claim courtiers. She said "shoe" instead of "slipper" **94**

TOT 'GOADED TO FIGHT'

by Our Legal Correspondent **Joshua Rosenbeard**

A SMALL boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons (David Miliband), was encouraged by his minders to fight a much older and bigger boy (Gordon Brown).

Luckily the authorities intervened in time before the sick spectacle could reach its grisly climax. Said one witness, "They were all standing around, Blair, Reid and Clark, egging him on and shouting "Don't be a coward! Smack him one in the gob! Go on, Dave! Kick him in the throat!"

The defence however claimed that the minders had only wanted 'to toughen Dave up".

"He is a bit of a cissy," said John Reid, "and needs *(cont. p. 94)*

GREAT SPEECHES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

FREE IN TODAY'S GUARDIAN

No 1. Earl Spencer's historic address to his second wife. (2006)

I'm sorry darling, I know you've just had a baby and all that but I've been seeing someone else and I want a divorce.

We Spencers have a long and distinguished tradition of behaving like shits and I'm no different It's in the blood. Ask my first wife. She had loads of children before I dumped her! Anyway, I've got to go and have lunch now with my old friend Guppy, his wife's jolly tasty. Aren't the Windsors awful??

© Earl Spencer 2006.

Tomorrow: Guardian Editor Alan Rusbridger's historic address to the staff. *"I'm sorry you can't have any more money because I've got it all."*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Terry Major-Ball

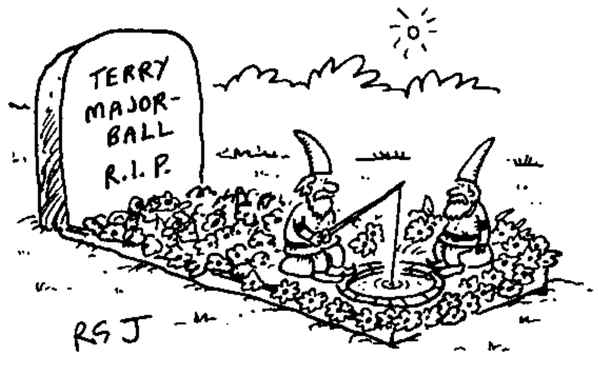
So. Farewell
Then Terry
Major-Ball.

Famous garden
Gnome manufacturer,
Author and
Larger-than-life
TV personality.

Keith says you
Had a brother
Who was once
A Prime Minister.

But you can't
Trust everything Keith
Says.

E.J. Thribb (17½)



Der Telegraf Spee
DREI PFENNIGS

FÜHRER'S 'CONCERN' OVER LEGACY

by Our Man In The Bunker
Professor Hugh Very-Ropey
(later Lord Paul Dacre)

OUR BELOVED Führer has been telling his inner circle of his "deep concern" that his historic legacy may be overlooked by future generations.

I understand that he has confided in senior Party figures his fear that his many great achievements in rebuilding the country after the dark days of the Thatcher Republic will be overshadowed by the unpopularity of the war, for which many hold him reponsible.

Blair Hitler

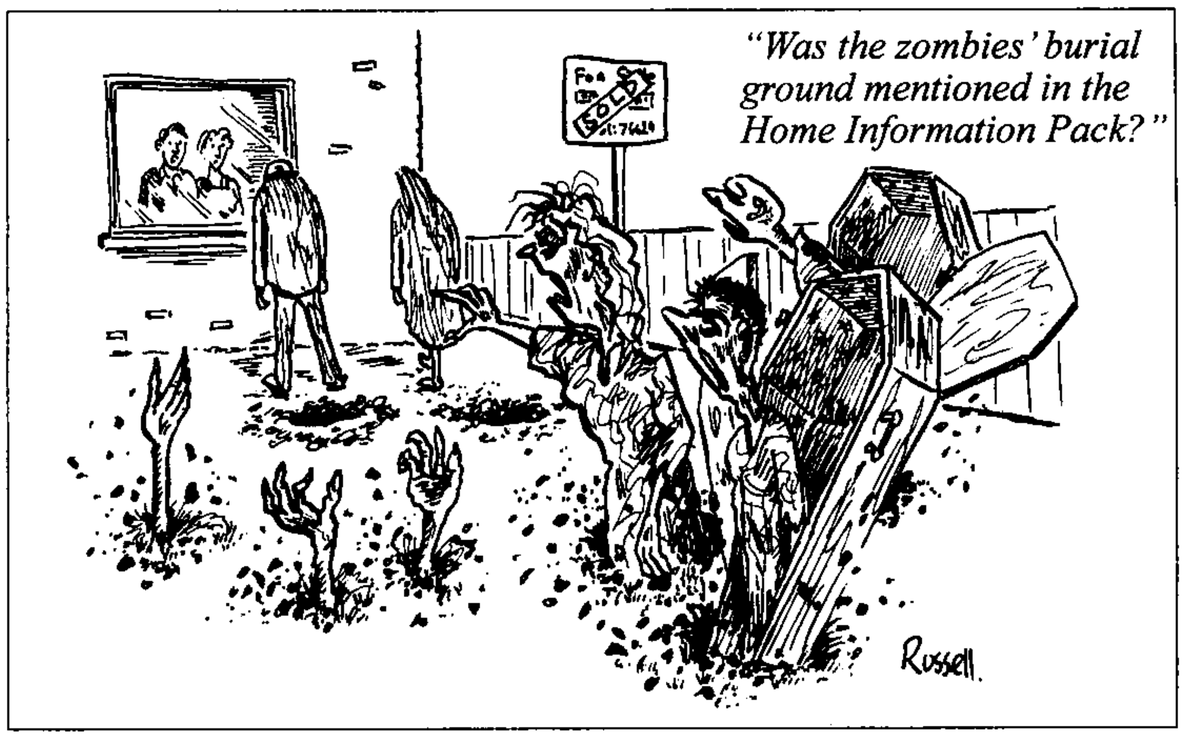
"All people go on about is that wretched war," the Führer has reportedly told aides. "No one ever mentions how much I did to improve schools and hospitals – not to mention my historic constitutional reforms, such as burning down the Reichstag."

The Führer is convinced that in a thousand years' time people will come to see him as the greatest leader his country ever had, even if no one realised it at the time.

"No one," he insists, "will even mention the war. They will merely associate me with public services which are the envy of the world, and with winning the Olympics for Berlin in 1936."

TORIES ATTACK LABOUR OVER REFUSE COLLECTION

"Hi, it's me! Just pretending I've got a hands-free mobile..."



Fairy Tales Of Our Time

No. 94

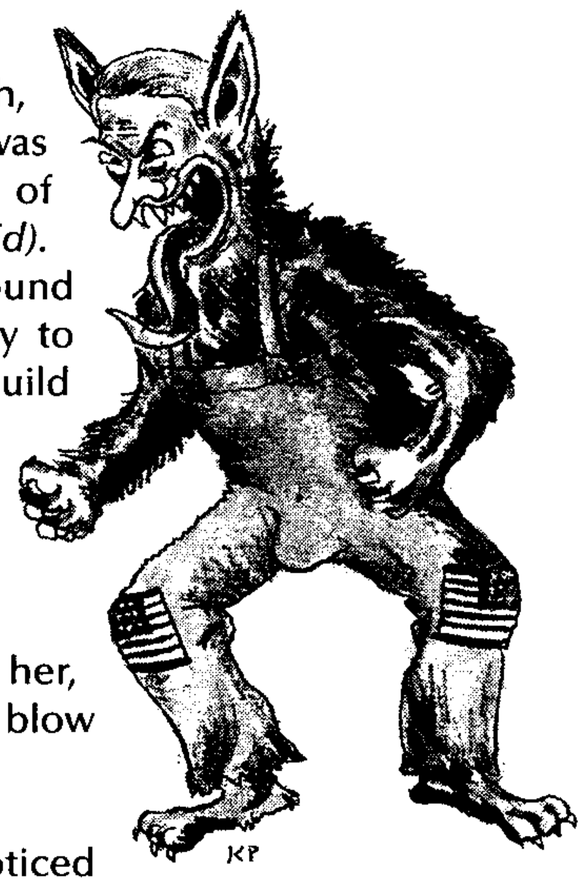
THE BIG BAD WOLFOWITZ

THERE WAS once a Big Bad Wolfowitz whose only interest in life was to go around the world looking for things to blow up.

One day he came across some poor little Iraqis, huddled in their homes made of straw.

He said to them, "Surrender at once, or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your country up."

And he did!



Fresh from this great triumph, the Big Bad Wolfowitz was promoted to be put in charge of the World Bonk *(surely 'Bank'? Ed)*.

Now his job was to go around the world giving lots of money to poor people to enable them to build more houses of straw.

"This is no fun," said the Big Bad Wolfowitz. "Can't I give the money to my girlfriend instead?"

So he did. And he said to her, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your skirt up."

And he did that too.

But eventually everyone noticed what he was up to.

So they all huffed and puffed and thought they should blow him away.

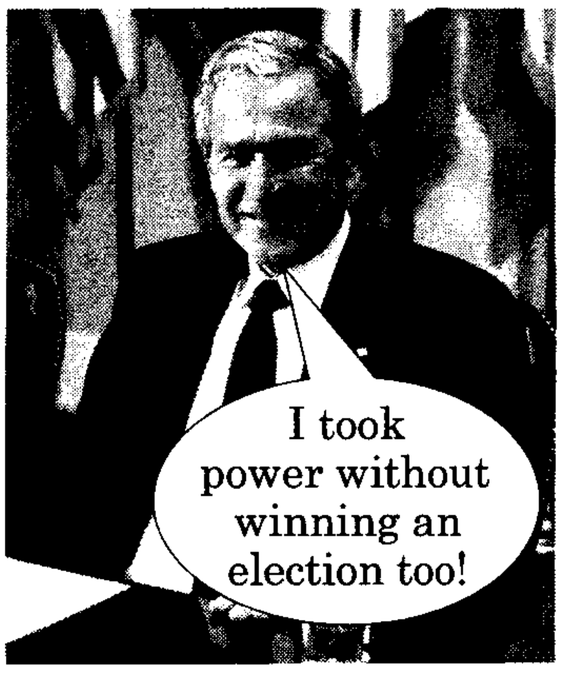
And they did.

So that was the end of the Big Bad Wolfowitz.

the PREMIERSH*TS

JOHN, ALL THIS TALK OF THE 'QUADRUPLE; IS IT AFFECTING THE PLAYERS?
TERRY
NO, NOT AT ALL
CHELSEA STUMBLE AT N'CASTLE
BUT DON'T YOU AND THE LADS FEEL A BIT OF PRESSURE FROM ALL THESE TROPHIES?
NOT REALLY... WELL MAYBE JUST A BIT
ARE WE GOING TO DINNER NOW FRANK?
THERE'S STILL TIME TO DO A BIT OF SHOPPING ASH
HURRY UP JOHN!

BUSH IMPRESSED BY FELLOW LEADER BROWN



Exclusive To All Newspapers

WHY DID KATE AND WILLS SPLIT?

We don't know.

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S LADY MUCK!?! (GEDDIT?)

■ **PRINCE WILLS!!?! What a slimy love rat!!?? How dare he dump the lovely Miss Middleton (aka The People's Kate) as if she was some worn-out dishcloth?! You should be ashamed of yourself, sir, a-gigglin' and a-sniggerin' with your pissed posh pals behind her back – just because her mum says 'toilet' instead of 'lavatory'!?!! WHO BLOODY CARES!!?! Take a tip from Auntie Glenda, Your Royal Snobbiness, and flush yourself down the toilet!!?!**

■ HATS OFF to Prince William!!?! He's had the courage to do the decent thing and not keep his girlfriend Kate hanging around waiting for him to pop the question!?!! What young man in modern Britain gets hitched at 24, for Gawd's sake?!? NO ONE!!!?! Like any other red-blooded young buck, Wills needs to sow his wild oats before he walks down the aisle with Miss Right. Good for you, sire, and happy hunting in Boujis!?!!?

■ **THE NATION's hearts go out to lovely Kate Middleton, the demure English rose who never lost her dignity amidst the Royal razzamatazz!!?! Now she's been chucked out like an old dishcloth, and sits a-sighin' and a-sobbin' as she dreams of what might have been!?! Boo-hoo-hoo!?! Forgive me fellas if I have a lil weep into my hankie!?! But take a tip from auntie Glenda, Kate – you're better off without him?!?? One Middleton is worth a hundred Windsors any day – and that's official!!?!**

■ QUEEN KATE Middleton!?!! Don't make me laugh!?!! Who did she think she was kidding, measuring up the throne of England when she was a common shop girl on the make!?!! And you know what? Her mother can't even spell the word 'toilet'!!?!! WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO, FOR GAWD'S SAKE!!?!

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Maypole Machos:*

- **Dave Miliband.** He's the 'coming man'!?! Geddit!?!
- **Ed Balls** – say no more!!?!
- **Michael Vaughan**. Can't score, love?! I'll sort you out!!?!

Byeeee!!!

12 years later...

Lines On The Separation Of His Royal Highness Prince William And Miss Kate Middleton

by the late Poet Laureate **Sir John Betjeman**

How To Get On In Society

A Royal Wedding, so why should we spoil it
Just because Kate's mum chews gum and says 'toilet'?
I think Kate would have made a right Royal wife
Even if Carole says 'Pardon' and eats with a fishknife.

(It's not very good is it? Put it in if you like. Cheerio, old bean. J.B.)

Advertisement

Gnome Novelty Royal 'Split Plate' Offer

To commemorate the historic break-up of the relationship between His Royal Highness Prince William and Miss Kate Middleton, the Gnome Heritage Collection is proud to announce a limited edition of 2 million unique hand-crafted souvenir plates in Royal Berkshire china.

The Gnome plate comes already "pre-broken" into two halves, to reflect the deep sense of sadness and loss felt by the entire nation at the news that the relationship of the Royal couple had irreparably broken down.

The two halves of the plate can be used separately, suitable for side-salads, olives, Pringles, Doritos or similar.

Alternatively, they can be mounted for joint display in your heirloom cabinet, to delight your family and friends for years to come.

Just send £375 to Gnome Split Royal Plate Offer, Unit 94B, The Ashcroft Trading Estate, Belize.

WARNING: Your plate may arrive broken into more than two pieces.

WILLS AND KATE SEPARATE

Why I Didn't Have A Clue That This Would Happen

● The inside story of how I knew nothing about it by Our Royal Reporter PHIL SPACE

YES, when I said last week that the engagement of *Prince William and* Kate Middleton was only "days away", it was obvious that nobody tells me anything and that *(You're fired. Ed.)*

How They Are Not Related Any More

William the Conqueror (1066)
|
William the Deedes (1087)
|
Wilhelm the Kaiser
(1914-1918)
|
William the Just (1950,
as narrated by Martin Jarvis)
|
World Cup William (1966)
|
William the Hague
(£800,000 a year)
|
William the Bastard (2007)

Katherine
the Great
|
Katherine
the Kate
|
Kate
the Moss
|
Kathy Come Home
|
Kath 'n' Kim
|
Kiss Me Kate
|
Kate Middleclass

"Why Doctor, I don't know how you manage to keep your prices so low?"

WHO ARE THEY, The Upper Class Girls Whom Prince William Is Now Free To Marry?

1 Lady Poshella Nobbington-Nobbe, youngest daughter of Lord Lordly, the 37th Earl of Urle. Helps run her brother's Mayfair nightclub "Chavs".

2 The Hon Tatiana Lavatory-Napkin, eldest daughter of ancient land-owning family whose ancestor Guy de Lavatoire-Serviette came over with William the Conqueror

3 Fruitella Fruitington-Fruitsworth, known as "Fruity" in Royal Circles. Hugely rich, great fun and unencumbered by any GCSEs.

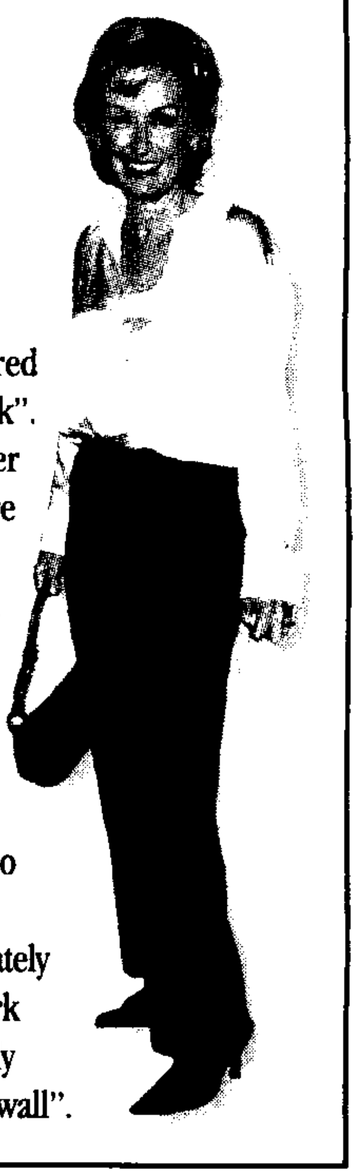
4 Princess Mercedes Benz von Ribena-Saxon-Drugzen-Rokken-Röll. 14th in line to the throne of the Bavarian principality of Snobenia.

5 Debretta "Debbo" Featherstone-Hough *(pronounced "Trouserpress")* is the middle daughter of *(That's enough. Ed.)*

Advertisement

TINA

by Diana Spencer



They called her "the bubbly blonde who captured the hearts of everyone from London to New York". With her Sloaney sex appeal, high-spirits and her media savvy approach, Tina was the toast of everywhere from Tinsel town to Tunbridge Wells.

Yet in this searing reappraisal by Royal expert Diana Spencer, the real Tina is at last revealed. Ruthless, callous and scheming, read how:

- She cynically married an older man in order to advance her career.
- Her temper tantrums were legendary and she reduced grown men like Alexander Chancellor to whimpering ninnies.
- She was an outrageous flirt and used her sexual wiles to gain power and status.
- She wanted desperately to be Queen of New York but it all ended tragically when her career "hit a wall".

Do you think this joke is in bad taste? Do you want to cancel your subscription? Let us know what you think so we don't have to fill the paper ourselves.
Simply email us at jointhedebate@dailytelegnome.co.uk

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0900 hrs All leave cancelled to permit the entire Neasden force to attend an all-day training programme. This consisted of a showing of Episodes 1 to 12 of the BBC drama series 'Life On Mars'.

Officers were warned that they would find some scenes on the DVDs deeply disturbing, but they were instructed that the purpose of the presentation was to demonstrate how not to carry out policing duties in a modern social environment.

Officers were expected to take notes while the films were being shown, and to list all those incidents in which the police personnel were seen acting in an improper and inappropriate fashion.

After the showing, officers participated in a workshop session, at which they concluded that the most shocking failing of the police officer depicted in the training video was his repeated attempts to solve crimes and arrest criminals, rather than attending to more highly prioritised duties such as paperwork, internal equality monitoring and conducting health and safety assessments for officers likely to be exposed to a crime situation.

WANTED

The following resolution was accordingly agreed: that, as a matter of the highest operational priority, an armed response unit should be deployed to arrest DCI Gene Hunt on 27 prima facie offences of bringing the police service into disrepute.

Owing to the manpower deployment above, no police reserves were available to respond to a series of 999 calls reporting a "battle" in Primark Road between two alleged armed gangs comprising 381 young males of Somali origin, who were engaging in a "mass murdering incident".

April Showers

Beano Boris on the declaration of MPs' earnings in the register of members' interests

Cripes!! Blimey!! Have you seen how much yours truly trousers for writing this stuff every week?! 250 thousand smackers! Oooo-er! That's... well... nearly a fiver per jolly old word! Crikey! And that's another fiver!! Crikey! Crikey! Crikey! Another fifteen spondulicks! Enough to buy a decent bottle of champoo-ers and a new silly hat to wear on my bike!! No wonder the girls go wild whenever I appear – "Is that a wallet in your pocket Boris or are you just pleased to see me?" they all ask. And you know what I say readers? "Just pleased to see you!" Whoops!! Trouble Ahoy! Old Bozza's foot firmly in mouth again! Crikey! Memo to self: Stick to slagging off old Portsmouth in future!?! Much safer!? There we are Mr Editor! Now hand over the lolly! And to think people say I'm a buffoon!? Cripes!? Blimey!!

Late News

TORY SHOCK

THE Conservatives have insisted that their much derided no-confidence motion on Tuesday *did* produce tangible results.

"We are now certain we have no confidence in George Osborne ever landing a punch on Gordon Brown," said a senior Conservative *(cont. p. 94)*

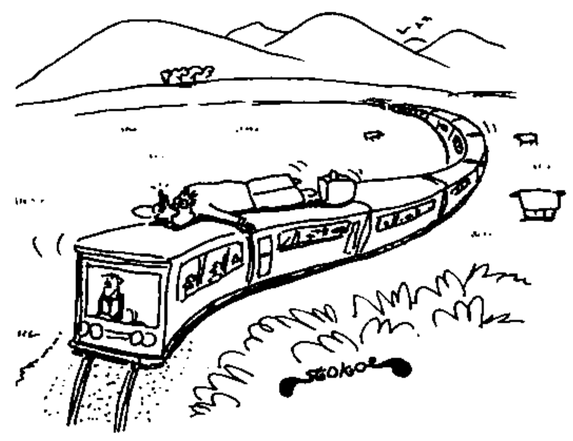
SELLAFIELD HORROR

BRITISH Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNLF) says it's been taken aback by the level of anger over the revelation that it had retained body parts from workers at Sellafield who died over a period of 29 years.

"Usually the employees had at least a couple of extra fingers or toes, so we didn't think the relatives would be too concerned," said a BNFL *(cont. p. 94)*

On Other Pages

- Scientists discover 'Excuse Gene' for fat people. p. 94.



"Hi, I'm on the train, because I can't afford to get in it"

MARIJUANA FOUND AT RASTAFARIAN TEMPLE

- Pope 'not Protestant'.
- Bears 'avoid public toilets'.

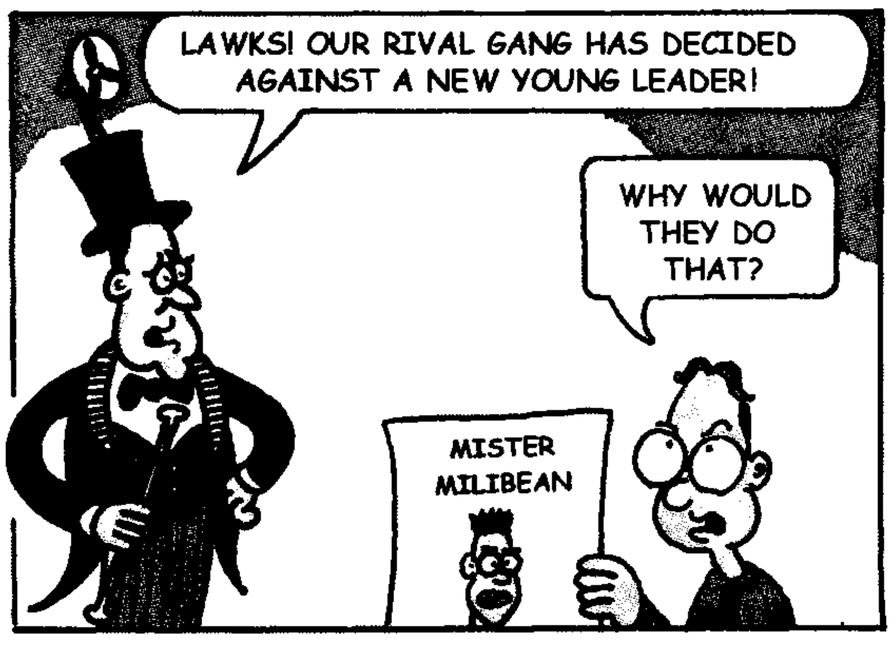
Apology

IN OUR last issue we offered a free CD of Sir Stephen Fry reading out the 1901 census.

We regret that, owing to warehousing problems in the Billericay area, many readers may have failed to receive their CD as advertised.

We apologise to readers for this failure, and are delighted to offer instead a free DVD showing the complete series of Twinings Tea commercials made for television by Sir Stephen in 2006 and 2007.

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS FROM THE GREANO AND DANDY


LAWKS! OUR RIVAL GANG HAS DECIDED AGAINST A NEW YOUNG LEADER!
WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?
MISTER MILIBEAN
BECAUSE HE'S A SILLY TWERP CALLED DAVE!!
WATCH IT OIKY OSBORNE OR WE'LL THROW YOU IN THE FOUNTAIN!!!

Exclusive to all newspapers

An American Tragedy

AT TIMES like these, no words are adequate to convey the sense of honour... how to begin to explain such a senseless tragedy... no words are adequate... all too easy to apportion blame... gun culture... right to bear arms... America a funny place... nothing can be done... something must be done... no words adequate...

● Full Report and Pix **1-94**

● Have you got a view on the Virginia killings? Or do you have nothing interesting to add? Let us know either way on *jointhemassacredebate@fillupthepaper.co.uk*

That Media Outrage

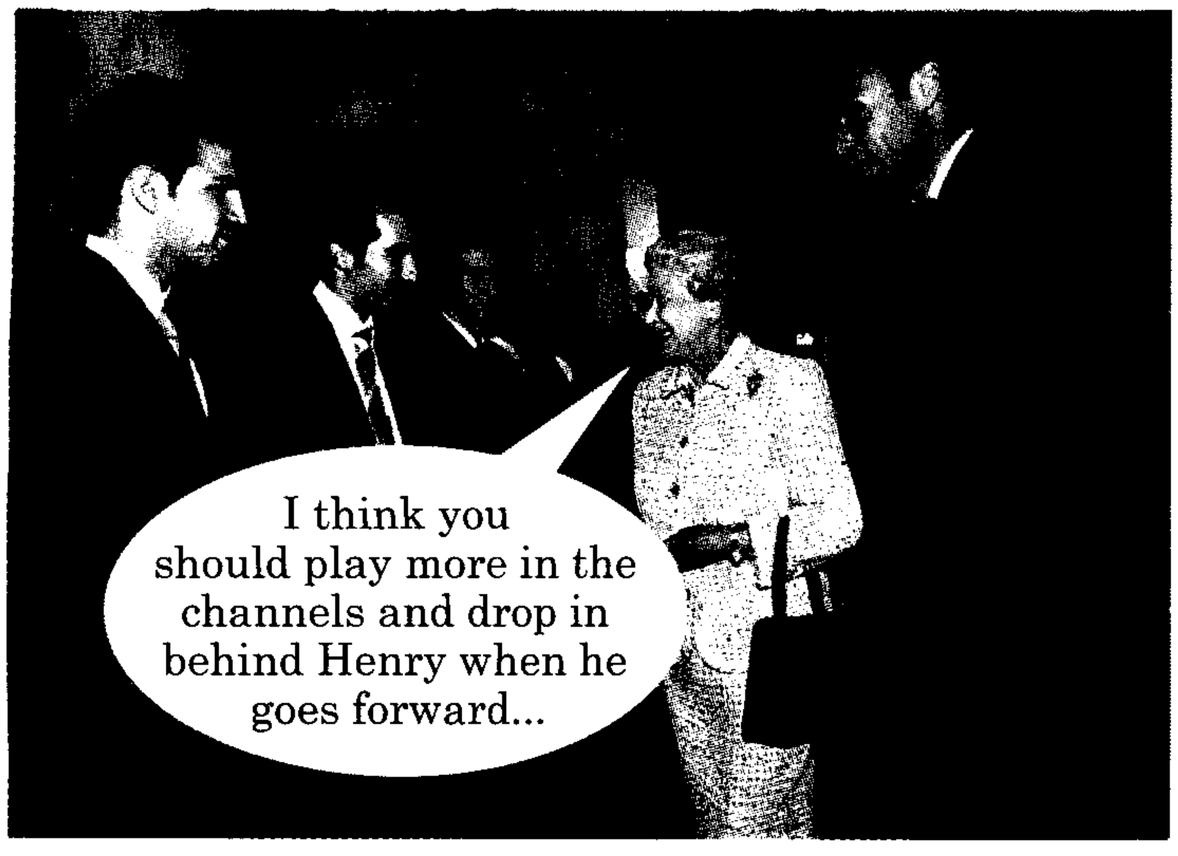
"If that twisted sicko thinks we'll encourage further spree killers by buying into his sick fantasies and making a celebrity of him..."

"...he's absolutely RIGHT!"

200 DEAD — DERANGED US LONER BLAMED FOR MASSACRE

GEORGE W. BUSH, described as an "oddball" and a "psychopath", was yesterday *(cont. p. 94)*

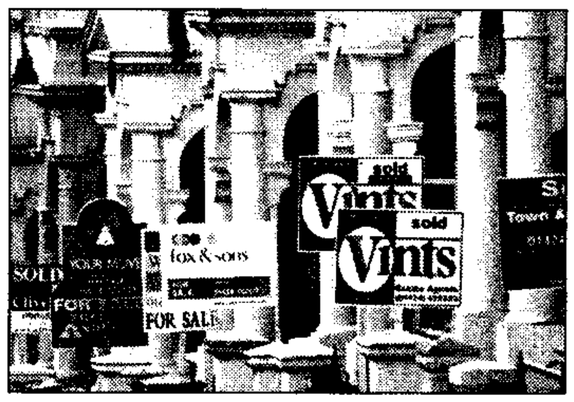
NEW-LOOK QUEEN



Daily Mail
FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 2007

WILL SOARING HOUSE PRICES LEAD TO COLLAPSE IN HOUSE PRICES?

By Our Entire Staff
Paul Filthy-Dacre



THERE was widespread panic all across Middle England today as it was announced that house prices have risen by 84 percent since I started writing this piece.

Experts were warning that this could precipitate a catastrophic collapse in house prices by as much as 84 percent by the time I have reached the end of this article.

On other pages: *Can Cancer Give You Cancer?* A Mail Health Special.

BRITISH CRICKETERS TO SELL STORIES

by **W.G. Disgrace**

THERE was outrage today when it was revealed that Britain's defeated cricketers could sell accounts of their humiliating defeat to the mass media.

Many of the cricketers are believed to be considering signing up with publishers, newspapers and TV news organisations.

Said one player, "I just want to set the record straight, I wept every day at my treatment by the evil South Africans, New Zealanders, Australians, and Sri Lankans."

He continued, "They threw cricket balls at me, stole my wicket and worst of all called me Mr Has Been."

STUMPED FOR CASH

But senior figures from the world of cricket are furious that players would be profiting from their ordeal. Said one, "They capitulated without a fight. How dare they try and make money out of it? Am I being paid for this by the way?"

THE DEATH OF NELSON

DIARY

THE CHILDREN OF QUIDSIN

by J.R.R. Tolkien

High seated on his throne grim and lofty, Mur Doch, Dark Lord of All Media[1] summoned forth his Elvish[2] hordes from every corner of the Earth. "Venture hence and cometh not you back," he said, black spittle dripping forth from his hollow mouth like the darkest beetles to a rotten root. "Until you have found a fresh volume that will draw to me over me a million bags filled with gold."

"Now!" screamed his wife, Princess Wendi, from her position high on the Dark Lord's groin, "Lupert needs that gold NOW!"

Thither scurried the skulking minions of Mur Doch from 'neath their dank and mossy stones amidst the grey corridors of Hamm Ur Smith[3], ready to find that forgotten manuscript destined to amass unearthly fortunes for their Lord and Master.

Out went they in their great quest with their Oyster Cards[4], journeying deep underground to board The Central Line to all points East via Holland Park and Marble Arch, Chancery Lane and Bank, through Liverpool Street and Snaresbrook, forward through Buckhurst Hill and Theydon Bois, thence culminating at Ongar.

In the North and in the South, in the West and in the East, and in locations twixt, there dwelt numberless creatures whose habit it was to feed avidly and with great eagerness upon fantasy half-baked larded with sentences penned backwards. These creatures, hunched and bearded, sheltered beneath the Hood of Ana Rak[5]. Known they were as The Dorcs.

When the Elvish hordes of Mur Doch cornered these Hooded Dorcs, they implored them to impart the secret of the source of their eager yearnings.

"Weak in body and dull-witted of mind, unpractised in skills social and identifying more closely with made-up foot-high creatures of forest and cavern than with human beings, we find nurture in the great works of Tolkein," they replied. "But," they added with tear upon tear running down their sodden cheeks, "we grieve, oh Elvish hordes, for the Wizard Tolkien met his death thirty years ago or more, and there now exist no more tales penned by his masterly hand for to keep us in supply! Without these tales we shall wither and die in our Ana Raks, for nothing but Tolkien can keep our eyes open, not even the myriad tales of Harip Otter[6]."

The Death of Tolkien weighed heavily on the battalions of the Elvish hordes of The Dark Lord Mur Doch, not least the Reps and the Peeyars. Great was their distress at his absence.

In the decades that followed the year of his funeral, the Elvish hordes had paid homage to Tolkien by squeezing his fruit dry. Audio cassettes begat movies and movies begat videos and videos begat advertising and advertising begat tie-in products and tie-in products begat bubble-bath and all of these grew out of the great mountain of unpublished manuscripts discovered by chance in dusty drawers.

But that mountain had now dwindled to a mole-hill. Whateth were they to do? The Elvish hordes returned to Hamm Ur Smith and consulted a Wise Man of HarpiCollins who held the Red Biro to his mouth and sucked upon it. His pronouncements, when they emerged from his mouth, were indeed of the gravest.

"For a book[7] to be a book," he said, "There must perforce be something between its covers. But where is the new Tolkien? These thirty years that have passed since his death, The Silmarillion, Finn and Hengest and The Map of Middle Dearth, The Vomit, More Tales of Viagra, The Monster of Dudd and the Book of Lost Threads, have all issued forth from our presses. But now the well hath run dry. And a dry well giveth not forth any water. In other words, he who would seek water from a dry well shall find his bucket empty. To put it in a way other, no well that has no water may be called full. Or, if you would care to hear me express if differently, then a bucket plunged into a well is – "

"No! No! We have heard more than enough! Please do not strain yourself to continue, Old Wise Man! Your point we have got!" interjected the Elvish hordes, battling battlingly against their urge to sleep.

"You must realise, oh dark hordes, that he whose pockets are filled with water is likely to have damp trousers!" said the Old Wise Man. "But hold! Before you depart, let me intone another thing, or thing another – "

But by now they felt the Old Wise Man had gone on long enough, so they unsheathed their swords and slew him until he was deceased and all over the land there was much rejoicing.

"What you mean, you sirry iriots, no more where that came from?" screamed Princess Wendi as the Elvish hordes returned to Hamm Ur Smith. With that, she issued a threat to release Redund Ants over their heads until they begged her to desist.

Grievous was the sorrow of the Elven folk, who lived in fear for their livelihoods until one of them up spoke.

"Who art thou?" they said.

"I am the Lord of Mark Etting," saith he. Slimy of appearance shifty of character, they recognised him as the Holder of the Secret.

"I shall now give you directions to the magic Barrel of Publi Shing" continued he. "And you know what you must do when you have chanced upon that Barrel?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied. "We must surely scrape it!"

For many lengthy days and nights the Elves scraped hard and long at that magic Barrel, until finally they had produced The Children of Quidsin[8], a work thoroughly long of wind, whose going was heavy. But the Dorcs of Ana Rak queued all day and all night outside the Stones of Water, and money flowed thither into the fathomless pockets of Mur Doch, Dark Lord of All Media, and once again a great snore erupted all over the lands.

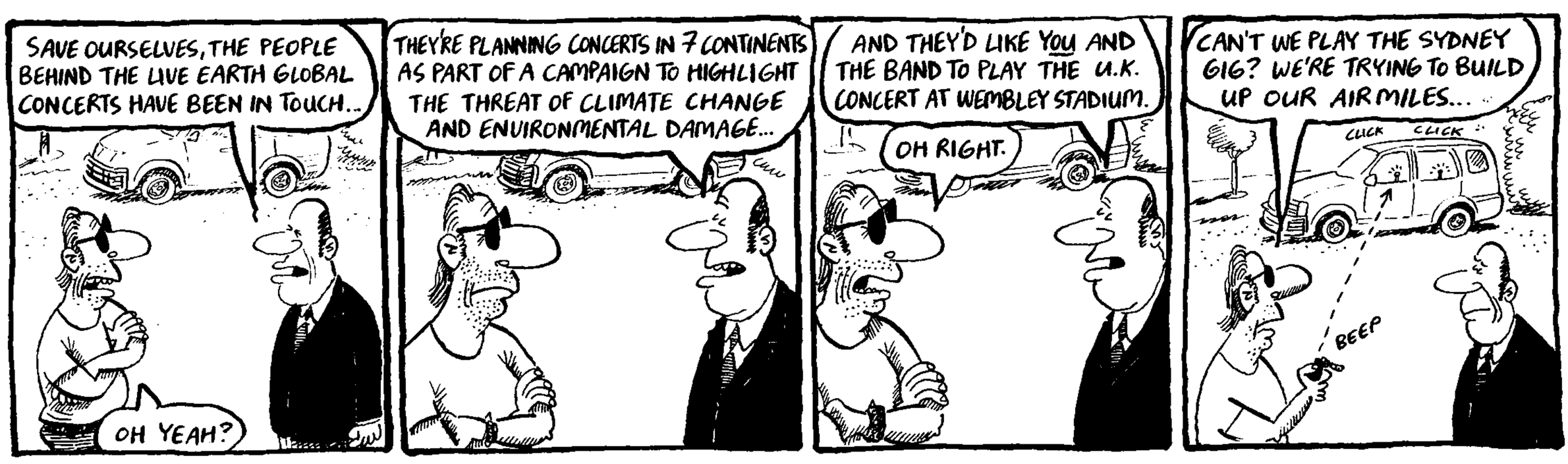
FOOTNOTES:

(1) Mur Doch, Dark Lord of All Media, Master of The Sun and The Sky. Owner of The News of the World, stern ruler of thousands of dwarves who live in caves and spend their lives scrabbling in the undergrowth for tales of seediness and misery in order to bring about the downfall of all mankind and thus boost sales.
(2) Dead troubadour.
(3) The borough of Hamm Ur Smith adjoining Ful Ham to the East and close, too, to the Bush of Shepherd.
(4) Emblems affording their possessors magical powers of discount travel.
(5) To be found in the racks of Mill Etts and available in all sizes.
(6) Harip Otter lived in The Chart of Bes Sella for many a long year.
(7) Commodity sold three for price of two at The Stones of Water and in the Kingdom of Tesco.
(8) Soon to be a $600 million movie, starring Jack Nicholson as Bilbo Baggins and Tom Cruise as Quidsin.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


SAVE OURSELVES, THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE LIVE EARTH GLOBAL CONCERTS HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH..
OH YEAH?
THEY'RE PLANNING CONCERTS IN 7 CONTINENTS AS PART OF A CAMPAIGN TO HIGHLIGHT THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE...
AND THEY'D LIKE YOU AND THE BAND TO PLAY THE U.K. CONCERT AT WEMBLEY STADIUM.
OH RIGHT.
CAN'T WE PLAY THE SYDNEY GIG? WE'RE TRYING TO BUILD UP OUR AIR MILES...
CLICK CLICK
BEEP

Literary Review

Bit Dulwich

Tomorrow
Graham Swift
(*Picador*, £16.99)

HELLO! I'm Paula and I'm the narrator of Graham Swift's new novel. If you've ever read any of Mr Swift's other novels then you'll already know a good bit about me. *You'll know*, for example, attentive geographer that you are, that I probably live in South London – in Putney, say, or Dulwich. And you'll have a good idea of the way in which Mr Swift renders my thought processes down on paper. That's right. Lots of thoroughly ordinary sentences, filtered through a thoroughly ordinary mind. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. You can take it or leave it. Now and again there comes a flourish – Sussex in the Sixties, the very phrase like a glistening salad – but mostly it's a succession of stock formulations. Sometimes I wonder whether this is actually a very exciting way of writing a novel, but then I'm not a successful novelist like Mr Swift. Anyway, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And it's a watched pot that never boils. Oh dear me yes.

Well, Mr Swift has given me a little secret to divulge, as I lie here in the small hours in Putney or Dulwich or Wimbledon. Quite frankly I'd like to get to sleep, but you can't always get what you want, can you, and sometimes the thing you need escapes you (Mr Swift has this odd habit, you know, of saying the same thing in slightly different ways). Actually it's quite a big secret. Have I been cheating on my husband, Mike? Or has he been cheating on me? What is it that our twin children are going to find out tomorrow on their sixteenth birthdays? Well, that would be telling wouldn't it, and it would remove the whole element of suspense on which the averagely successful work of fiction depends.

No, I think I'd better string things out a bit. So I'll tell you about how Mike and I met, back at university in the 1960s, and Grandpa Pete, and Mike's thesis about snails, and our house in Herne Hill. And all the time you'll be wondering about what dreadful thing it is that I'm waiting to reveal to the children next morning, won't you? Except that Mr Swift has this other odd habit of always giving the game away long before the closing page. He did it in *The Light of Day* and now he looks as if he's going to do it again in this one. There's nothing I can do to stop him. You win some, you lose some. Mumps are better than measles. *Apres moi le deluge*. Oh well, here goes. Mike was infertile, you see, and the children were hatched out of a test-tube.

So now you know what awaits them, Nick and Kate, in the pale morning as the first stray light of Midsummer glows evanescently over the parched and friable grass – another flourish there, I trust you noticed. And yet I can't help thinking that it's only page 153 and most novels go on a lot longer than this. They do, though. Never mind. It would be a shame to stop now, and I don't think Mr Swift's publishers would be very pleased. So perhaps I'd better tell you about Otis our cat, and how terribly upset we all were when he disappeared, and the affair I had with the vet. His capable forearms. His rolled sleeves. You don't miss these things. Oh and a three-page description of a posh hotel we stayed in would certainly move matters forward a bit.

Nearly dawn, now. I must confess – it's not something I'd ever say in public, not when there are people about – that I worry about Mr Swift. I mean, he can really write rather brilliantly sometimes, but for some reason the bits where he does this don't sound like me, which is a bit of a disappointment for a girl. What a clever person would call *compromising the integrity of the narrative voice*. All the same, though, I got quite excited at the prospect of the final scene. What will the children say when they find out their origins lie not in daddy here but in a phial of anonymous sperm?

Wait a minute, though, it's light! It jolly well is! It's already getting light and here we are on the final page! Now, I don't know anything about novels, but it strikes me that there's something a bit weird going on. There is, though. I always thought that if you spent all those chapters, all those carefully marshalled words, all those patient accretions of sentences, building up to a denouement then you owed it to the reader to actually *have* the denouement rather than just stop at the moment where things are supposed to get interesting. Oh well. Mr Swift won the Booker Prize once, and I'm sure he knows best.

Books & Bookmen

■ THE Man Group is the world's largest hedge fund, so when it took over sponsorship of the Booker Prize it was unlikely to be content with honouring obscure British or Commonwealth novelists that neither it nor its clients had heard of.

No, these high-flyers wanted masters of the universe, just like themselves. Initially there was talk of opening the prize to North Americans, but another solution emerged: the biennial, £60,000 International Man Booker Prize, open to fiction galacticos of all nations for lifetime achievement.

Alas, when John Carey's panel chose the first winner in 2005 it was... an obscure figure the financiers and their clients had never heard of, the Albanian Ismail Kadare. But the 2007 shortlist, recently announced, shows signs of a rethink. This time the chairwoman, Elaine Showalter, is American, the other judges (Nadine Gordimer, Colm Toibin) also come from Anglophone countries, and no fewer than 11 of the 15 contenders write in English; 10 are based in the US, Canada or the UK. Showalter's panel has clearly got the message, and the bookies have made Philip Roth 6-1 favourite.

All this entails a farcical volte-face in which nine of the 18 stars chosen by Carey & Co were brutally dumped – it seems such authors as Gabriel García Márquez, Günter Grass and Milan Kundera were never world-class after all. But maybe they should feel relieved: four of Carey's selections have died in the two years since his squad was announced.

■ PRINCE WILLIAM and Kate Middleton can't be half so grief-stricken by their split as the hacks who'd been hoping for a quick buck from instant books rushed out to mark the royal engagement.

But one hack has already banked his advance. As long ago as last September, John Blake Publishing issued *William's Princess: The Love Story That Will Change the Royal Family Forever*, written *by Evening Standard* royal correspondent Robert Jobson. "This is the definitive inside account of how William's love affair with an ordinary middle-class English girl will reshape Britain's monarchy into a 21st century institution," the dust-jacket announced portentously. Whoops! No wonder John Blake is universally known as "Flakey Blakey"!

■ WILLIAM Hague claims to devote "95 per cent of my time" to politics since returning to the front bench as shadow foreign secretary, even giving up his lucrative *News of the World* column on his appointment and cutting down on the number of after-dinner speeches he delivers.

Not much of the spare 5 per cent was left for getting his William Wilberforce biog for Harper Collins done in time, it would seem. Due out in June, it fatally missed the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in March and the accompanying media coverage, when several other Wilberforce books were in the shops.

■ HANIF KUREISHI denounced "censorship" when the BBC pulled a Radio 4 reading of his award-shortlisted short story *Weddings and Beheadings*, about a cameraman forced by Middle Eastern kidnappers to film an execution.

But some would see the real scandal as being that an idea recycled from another medium should have been in the running for the £15,000 National Short Story Prize at all. *Weddings and Beheadings*, a short film written by Kureishi, was screened by More4 in January; so had Radio 4 gone ahead with the broadcast, listeners would have had the exciting experience of hearing the audio byproduct of a TV programme aired three months ago.

Were the judges anxious for a big name to add lustre to an otherwise anonymous set of finalists?

■ PICADOR has followed in the wake of Penguin by signing a pop star to write a series of books for children.

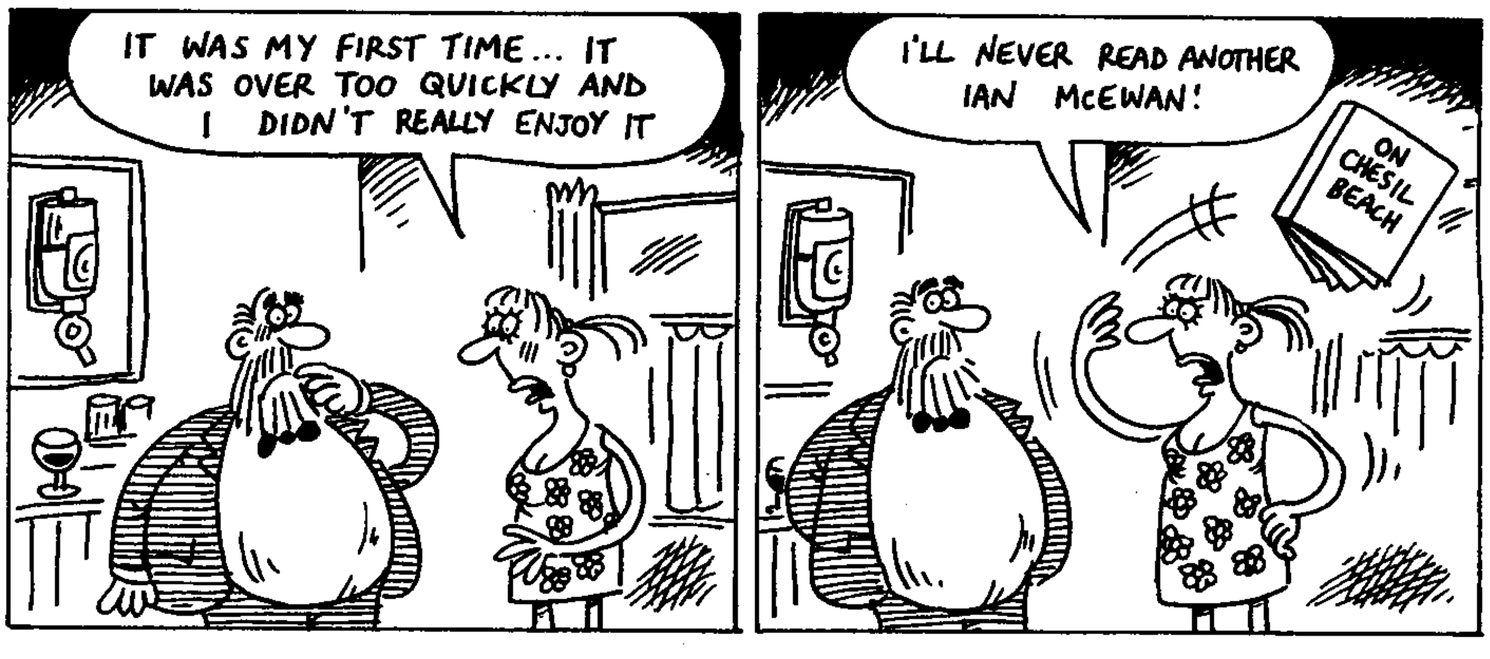
While Penguin managed to bag both Madonna and Kylie Minogue, Picador has snapped up, er, Geri Halliwell. The former Spice Girl has signed a six-book deal. Her publisher will be hoping that all six books sell well and don't experience the drop-off in interest that has plagued Madonna's literary output. Madge's first picture book, *The English Roses*, was a bestseller with over 70,000 copies sold in the UK, but the later title, *Lotsa De Casha*, has yet to manage sales of 4,000.

■ THE *Daily Mail* admires cartoonist Martin Rowson's memoir *Stuff* so much that it paid him £7,500 for a serial extract. But did *Mail* executives read the book all the way through before publicising it so generously?

"I think that we all recognise the unspoken subtlety with which the Inferno of Profanity is divided into different circles, at different depths," Rowson writes on page 288. "The deepest circle is for cunts, and there are others for pricks, arseholes, wankers, shits, tossers and so on. Down deep in the bottom of the pit lurk cunts like John Birt, Peter Mandelson, Rupert Murdoch, Paul Dacre..."

Oddly enough, this passage wasn't included in the serialisation.

'Bookworm'



Pseuds Corner

Wednesday
I caught a flight from Buenos Aires to Paris, where I live. I had spent the week in Patagonia, close to a beach that's home to a huge colony of penguins, and the site of my latest work. The piece evolved from a series of columns about landscape that I wrote for an Italian architecture magazine. I came up with the idea of gathering them together into a lecture and delivering it to penguins (I liked the irony of addressing an argument to seabirds). I had to crawl towards them on the beach so they didn't get freaked out. Then, when night fell, I delivered my lecture and filmed the event

using my infra-red camera. It was fun, but also odd. As I looked at these 400 penguins, who were paying attention to my voice, I kept thinking "I really must be an artist."

Artist PHILIPPE PARRENO,
'My Week', Weekend Telegraph

"I called Pete Townshend and his girlfriend Rachel Fuller... Pete wrote a song on his new album Endless Wire talking about a mirror door and I so loved the image that I used it in a poem I wrote...

Icon
he is a hollow hyperbole/the crowd plays him like a flute/a mythical icon/a Dionysian fluke

the crowd lives out their fantasy/through his mirror door they see/an image of the person/
they wish that they could be

he fucks their women/and fights their battles against mediocrity/but when he comes home to me/all that's left is vd

I am off soon to do a week's residential poetry course with the Arvon Foundation in Devon. I am terrified because my poetry writing is very sporadic. I can't write it when I am happy. Luckily I have a deep well of sadness from my childhood and lots of disappointments in love to draw on."

JERRY HALL, 'My Life In Tracey Emin's Column', ***Independent***

What do you get if you co-opt the design aesthetics of modernism and constructivism (specifically Bauhaus artist Oskar Schlemmer's abstract dance piece 'Triadic Ballet', add in elements of Karl Marx's 'Das Kapital' and apply them to a musical composition by Waw Pierogi (from 1980s synth-pop band xex) based on the growing patterns of asparagus? The answer is Pil and Galia Kollectiv's 'Asparagus: A Horticultural Ballet.'

Time Out

A towel is ironed, a piece of clingfilm is unwrapped, a gnarled old tree reaches out of a canvas... Tacita Dean's haunting work is verging on greatness.

JONATHAN JONES,
Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: Phil Carter, Everyone, Caroline Wright, Azi Eftekhari.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

WORLD BANK

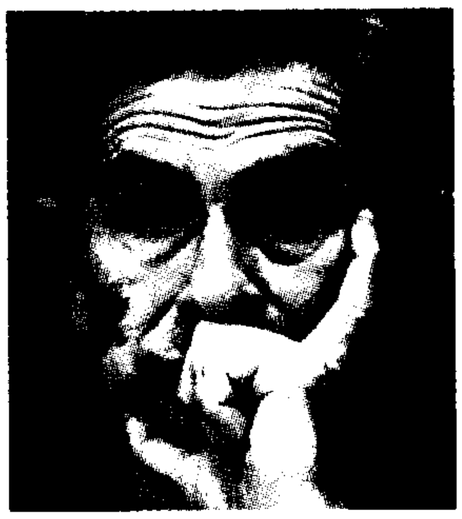
Sleazy does it

AS THE past comes back to haunt Paul Wolfowitz he may be regretting a recent bout of aggressive leaks by his team – not least against our own Hilary Benn, the international development secretary.

Before the scandal broke over the World Bank boss's girlfriend and her pay rise, Wolfowitz's team, trying to highlight the battle he faced combating corruption at the "bloated" bank, leaked sensitive documents to Fox News. These included uncensored minutes of a World Bank board committee in January that showed members slating Wolfowitz's proposals for reorganisation. Helpfully, the source included a cheat sheet of who's who on the board, which includes British diplomat Tom Scholar.

The minutes were far from diplomatic, but more damagingly Fox News quoted a Wolfowitz insider roundly attacking various board members, including one "widely regarded as a buffoon", and another who was said "to take orders from his country's development minister to shovel loans out the door and minimise the conditions on them".

The reference, it turns out, is to Scholar and his overlord Benn, whose support – along with that of other "buffoons" – Wolfowitz must now be so anxious to obtain.



Britain's assistance has not always been so uncertain. Back when Shaha Riza was on secondment from the bank to avoid conflicts of interest over her liaison with Wolfowitz, she was employed as "adviser" to the Foundation for the Future, a US government-sponsored initiative to "foster democracy" in the Middle East. The Foreign Office generously chipped in with a pledge of $1m for the Neo-con foundation, which aims to spread democracy by giving grants and encouraging "civil society" organisations in the Middle East.

Alas, though set up in 2005 this seedbed of democratic virtues has yet to make a single grant. When *Private Eye* asked if it considered the cash well spent, the Foreign Office replied that only half had so far been paid, and the rest would be disbursed "upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of project activity".

The Foreign Office's apparent lack of enthusiasm is well advised. Riza's last attempt to improve the Middle East was in 2003, when she was employed as an adviser on the reconstruction of Iraq, a project that was sadly less than successful.

P.S. A closer look suggests that Shaha Riza isn't the only World Bank whiz to have benefited from her connections. When Wolfowitz decided he needed someone to run his, er, "institutional integrity" department, charged with rooting out corruption at the Bank, who should he turn to in preference to a host of other candidates but ... the wife an old chum! Suzanne Folsom is married to the president of the neo-con International Republican Institute; George Folsom, like Wolfowitz, is a former member of the Bush administration.

A number of other well-connected Republicans have found their way into top jobs at the bank, including in its anti-corruption unit. Kerching!

POLICE

Knacker of the Yardies

HACKS are divided over whether the former Scotland Yard detective heading the investigation into the death of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer was a super-cop or a party animal, but a more worrying aspect of his career has been overlooked.

Mark Shields, the man first called into Jamaica to tackle Yardie crime and now its deputy police commissioner, has been found by the Court of Appeal to have made up evidence in a trial, or at least "compiled it after the event". Then, stupidly, he denied the appeal judges' findings and criticisms when he gave evidence in an unrelated case.

Seven years ago, when he was a detective chief inspector here, Shields was castigated by a senior Circuit Court judge over a drugs operation he was running in Essex. Undercover officers used a *Big Issue* seller, a heroin addict, in a botched effort to target suspected heroin dealers in Clacton.

Judge Warrick McKinnon threw out the evidence of all the undercover officers, describing one as an "evasive, deceitful and untruthful witness", another as "hardly much better". He concluded that the officers had been selective in their evidence "to the point of being misleading" and that it was no coincidence that tape machines had been off at crucial moments.

They had taken a vulnerable man who was trying to give up heroin and induced him to buy some, then supplied him with needles and watched him inject. It was, said the judge, both morally wrong and unacceptable to the court. The man in charge, Shields, was guilty of "trespassing over the lines of propriety in the wrong way". Unknown to the prosecution or indeed anyone else, Shields had briefed the undercover officers just before the trial. The judge said he could not be sure "that everything was not untoward in that meeting – far from it". Especially as he was criticised in the Court of Appeal in another case for compiling observation logs after the fact – and denied it to the judge.

Shield's judicial mauling may have been missed by hacks reporting the Woolmer murder saga, but it has not escaped the Jamaican justice system. The defence seized upon it during Shields' first high profile prosecution in Jamaica – the trial of three police officers accused of murdering civilians in Kraal.

Jamaica's deputy police commissioner was forced to admit under cross-examination that he had indeed been reprimanded by Judge McKinnon for the pre-trial briefing in Essex. He was shown McKinnon's judgment just after denying that he had called in prosecution witnesses for a similar briefing in the Kraal case. The three police officers were eventually acquitted.

Number crunching

£7m ■ Money pledged by Chancellor last year for an "annual schools sport festival"

£500m ■ National lottery funding withdrawn from sports facilities around country to help pay for London Olympics

PFI

Pollock to that

NO SOONER has the great PFI accountancy fiddle been exposed (see last *Eye*), than the leading academic critic of PFI this month took apart the Treasury "logic" that continues to be used to push the scheme.

All the studies on which the Chancellor bases his claims that PFI offers good value are shown in a new report by Edinburgh University's Professor Allyson Pollock (pictured) to be worthless. The evidence shows schemes funded through taxation and public sector borrowing are cheaper and more effective. But then the studies the government quotes were written by the very consultants who have made billions from PFI (PwC, the late Arthur Anderson and Mott MacDonald).

So why has the crucial question of the evidence on which the Treasury pushes PFI and skews the calculations (*Eyes passim*) never been examined by the body that should pick up these distortions to the public finances, the National Audit Office?

The answer is that, bizarrely, the same figures are used to justify crediting the NAO every year with having made PFI more efficient – and on the strength of this the NAO gets a bigger budget. Exposing the great PFI swindle would kill the goose that lays its golden eggs.

The nearest the NAO has come to a wide-ranging review was in 2005 when it launched an inquiry into the quality of PFI hospitals and their services. This was quietly and mysteriously pulled just before billions-worth of hospital schemes were announced last year because, a spokesman recently insisted, the findings were "inconclusive". Hmmm.

The Treasury, meanwhile, has predictably clammed up, refusing to release information it holds on PFI. Two months ago the senior Treasury mandarin responsible for the scheme, John Kingman, answering questions from the Public Accounts Committee on government efficiency, refused point-blank to discuss PFI even though it's by some way his boss's greatest contribution to inefficiency in public services. But that's best covered up. Gordon has just announced an expansion of PFI worth tens of billions.

Last year the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment condemned the design standards of PFI schools. Then last week the Association of Teachers and Lecturers' health and safety officer pointed out that in Bradford's PFI schools pupils were left "gasping for air" in poor ventilation and struggling with narrow corridors and small toilet blocks. All of which suits the PFI companies but does little for education.

Meanwhile this month one disastrous PFI project was put out of its misery. After just five years West Lothian college has paid its way out of its 30-year contract, at a cost of £28m to the taxpayer, because – surprise, surprise – it didn't offer enough flexibility. South of the border, Brown plans to use the same PFI methods to rebuild or refurbish every school. Great.

School con-tracts

MUCH of the extra PFI money will go on the desperately behind schedule Building Schools for the Future programme, despite all the evidence that PFI is just what schools don't need.

MoD's lousy defence

WHEN the "preferred bidder" for the biggest private finance initiative contract in history, the £19bn privatisation of defence training, was announced in January, among the awkward questions that weren't answered was why the Metrix consortium – which includes the part-privatised Qinetiq, EDS and Serco – was favoured.

All that the Ministry of Defence disclosed was a statement from the MoD-appointed "external independent evaluator" of the competing bids, Professor Steve Molyneux of Wolverhampton University (pictured), who specialises in e-learning techniques. Molyneux couldn't have been more glowing in his testimonial, declaring that the MoD "must be congratulated on one of the most comprehensive and rigorous evaluation methodologies I have ever been exposed to", and assuring his paymaster that the evaluation "will withstand the highest level of scrutiny should it be challenged". His £88,000 fee was duly put in the post.

But when the *Eye* tried a bit of low-level scrutiny, asking to see the evaluation evidence itself, the MoD was less ebullient. The information couldn't be disclosed as doing so "would undermine the confidentiality of the MoD's position in our discussions with Metrix".

We'll just have to take it from Professor Molyneux that the deal is a good one. And it almost certainly will be for him; the MoD did reveal that six months before Metrix was named preferred bidder, the cheeky Prof asked whether he was free to carry out consultancy work for the bidders. Officials at least got this one right and refused permission.

PRIVATE EQUITY

Day of the DfID

EXACTLY what is the Department for International Development up to? The latest antics from Hilary Benn's fiefdom have enabled several executives to become millionaires at the expense of the world's poorest countries. Surely shome mistake?

Back in 2002 Benn allowed managers at a government-owned development fund CDC (formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation) to buy out its fund management function. Two years later Actis Capital LLP was established (60 percent-owned by managers led by former investment banker Paul Fletcher, the rest *in* DfID's hands). Fees were agreed so that, according to Benn, Actis would break even but not profit from CDC for the first five years. It would be free to seek private sector fund mandates and make money from those, leading experts to predict profits of under £1m a year.

The price paid by the managers for their 60 percent stake was an affordable £373,000 – a figure calculated by financial advisers KPMG and endorsed by the government's own corporate finance specialists in its Shareholder Executive.

This now looks distinctly good value, as in its first full year (in which most of its business was managing CDC's money, i.e. taxpayers' cash) Actis didn't just break even but made profits of, er, $14m (£8m). Of this, the firm's accounts show that one member trousered $1.84m. Though neither Actis nor DfID would say who this was, it was almost certainly the top man Fletcher. And these profits for the bosses came *after* the firm's 192 employees shared $32.4m at an average of $168,000 each (including the most junior staff), plus a further $10.6m ($55k each) in "short-term incentive payments".

Among the investments paying particularly well was CDC's subsidiary Globeleq, which privatised Uganda's electricity supply in 2005 before, according to a recent War on Want report, increasing prices by 70 percent. And demonstrating Actis's long-term commitment to developing economies, the Shareholder Executive reported that "CDC successfully exited many investments in the year, generating significant levels of cash".

Actis's own significant level of cash, in the form of its multi-million pound profits, doesn't all go straight into the bosses' pockets, however. Closer inspection of accounts filed at Companies House reveals that one of the partners in Actis is a Jersey-registered employee benefit trust, a well-worn tax avoidance structure. Back in 2000 paymaster general Dawn Primarolo welcomed a global clampdown on the use of tax havens in this way. "These practices harm all countries, developed and developing," she sniffed. Yet Actis refused to answer any of the *Eye's* questions on this (or anything else) "for reasons of confidentiality". DfID claimed it was none of its business.

As a private equity concern Actis is shrouded in secrecy, despite an empty promise from Benn that it would be run "in accordance with best practice for a public limited company". But there's fat chance of that as governance is in the hands of supervisory board chairman Peter Smitham, veteran of Permira – the firm whose decimation of the AA sparked the recent furore over private equity.

Several questions now need answering, including: How was the implausibly low valuation for Actis reached? How did fees from the publicly owned CDC generate immediate multi-million pound profits for Actis's owners? How much was salted away through the Jersey trust and why was it concealed when the deal was announced three years ago? And, above all, why were a few men gifted a publicly owned business from which they could become millionaires at the expense of the world's poor?

LIE DETECTORS

Not feeling the benefit

THE latest weapon to be unleashed on benefit fraudsters by the Department of Work and Pensions is Voice Risk Analysis – a form of "lie detector" used by the insurance industry.

A pilot at Harrow Council's housing and council tax benefits department is to be run by VRA firm Digilog and the *Eye*'s old friend Crapita. Yet polygraph evidence is already discredited, so this system, based purely on "stress" registering in the caller's voice over the phone, is even more questionable.

Insurers such as Esure have given Digilog testimonials saying they "believe in the technology", but then they would, as convincing the public that it works may deter fraudulent claims – a kind of placebo effect.

In fact, a 2005 research paper by the US Air Force Research Laboratory concluded that VRA can identify stress "better than chance", but not as well as polygraphs. While it correctly identified 198 true statements in the test, the system also misidentified 118 true statements as false. The DWP says it plans to use the technology to "identify suspect cases" for further investigation – but results like that would spark a lot of unnecessary and time-wasting investigations.

Expanding the pilot to all branches of Jobcentre Plus, as proposed by the DWP, will mean yet another huge investment in computer systems. But at least the technology allows them to give the impression of being tough on benefit scroungers – priceless!

LEGAL AID

Watch out for the Baird-ie

MORE on legal aid poacher-turned-gamekeeper Vera Baird QC (see last *Eye*), who appears to care not one jot that the specialist civil rights law firms – once vital to her own career at the Bar – will be victims of her penny-pinching reforms.

Baird made clear her indifference in comments to Greenham common veteran protester Lindis Percy – "Don't muddle the public interest with solicitors' self interest." But these firms are probably the least self-interested around. They usually operate out of cramped rooms for poor and vulnerable clients, often at the front edge of legislative change.

Percy wrote to the legal aid minister last month reminding Ms Baird that it was not so long since they fought side by side to protect civil liberties as part of Percy's peace campaigns at US military bases. She was prompted to put pen to paper after reading an article by Matt Foot, a lawyer with Birnberg Peirce, a London legal aid firm that specialises in difficult civil rights, police, terrorism and miscarriage of justice cases.

Baird's response was unequivocal. Foot was full of misleading rhetoric and Percy "should not take note of it". "You will continue to be represented, whenever you need to be," she claimed. Solicitors' firms would have to find different ways of working "to maximise profits" and that might mean some would disappear. "That will not diminish the supply of advice from people who are now called Birnbergs and who may then have a different name," she said.

Birnberg Peirce – and firms like it – hardly "profit". All partners and staff, irrespective of seniority, take home salaries that are but a fraction of Baird's MP or QC wages, working all hours on some of the most difficult cases. That includes Gareth Peirce herself, who has worked to expose injustice for decades. But those tight salaries are dependent on the current system of legal aid being paid by the hour.

Baird's letter barely conceals her delight that many such specialist firms will go under with the introduction of flat fees and franchises that only go to bigger players. It will suit her and Labour colleagues just fine to have less specialist lawyers to challenge them in court. And this from the woman who, as last week's *Eye* reported, once claimed £22,537 in legal aid for a three-day murder appeal. Her fee was cut to £7,850.

Appeal for justice

SEVEN of the specialist legal aid firms that so irritate the government will next month challenge its decision to axe a discretionary compensation scheme for wrongly imprisoned people.

Last year then home secretary Charles Clarke announced that there will be no money for those wrongly arrested and detained but not brought to trial; for those whose convictions have been quashed while going through the normal appeal process; and for those whose convictions are quashed for anything other then new evidence – irrespective of the damage to their lives and families. Neither will there be a penny for asylum seekers who have been wrongly held alongside criminals or in detention centres.

Next month Clarke's successor, John Reid, will be asked to justify how it can be fair that two people can be wrongly locked up for the same offence and for the same time – with equal devastation to their lives and families – but be treated differently, just because the system worked more efficiently for one and not the other.

He will be forced to defend a decision that would deny compensation to people whose lives have been torn apart – people like Sally Clark, wrongly jailed for years before finally being cleared of killing her two sons.

The move was Clarke's half-cocked idea of axing £5m from the £8m per year paid to those wrongly convicted or incarcerated and transferring it to a fund to compensate the victims of crime. Clarke also sneaked in a range of measures to claw back money from victims of injustice. He gave the man who holds the compensation scheme's purse strings the right to deduct payments if those freed from jail have other convictions, or if they somehow "contributed" to the injustice.

Lord Brennan QC, the assessor (pictured), will no doubt go about his task with gusto. He was, after all, the man who came up with the ingenious idea of deducting the cost of board and lodging – around £60 a week for a stinking cell and prison porridge – from compensation. That decision was unexpectedly upheld by the Law Lords last month. And as *Eye* readers may remember, injustice makes a lot of work for Brennan. As he puts the red pen through the claims of those who have finally been freed from jail, he gets £340 per assessment, or £716 a day for the more complex cases. And now he is empowered to reduce claims for all sorts of contrived reasons. Brilliant.

Number crunching

130m ■ Pounds of profit for Thames Water last year

130m ■ Litres of sewage leaked from Thames Water plant last weekend

REVENUE & CUSTOMS

Accountancy scam-ps

THE *EYE* has often reported the tax avoidance services of the big four accountancy firms (KPMG, E&Y, PwC and Deloitte) and, using Freedom of Information laws, has been able to show how many scams they have between them been forced to divulge to the taxman under new "disclosure" rules (hundreds so far).

Now a bout of whingeing from the beancounters has put a stop to such embarrassment. When the *Eye* asked for the latest figures to check against the firms' recent sanctimonious claims to social responsibility, the request was declined. One firm had complained that giving out figures might help the big tax avoiders see how much dodging their rivals were up to. So giving out any numbers would, says HMRC, undermine "our relationship of trust with the firms involved and [prejudice] the number of schemes disclosed to us". So you can't know who's ripping you off and how often, as HMRC doesn't want to fall out with them.

The Partridge Family

HIGH hopes for the Revenue and Customs Prosecution Office – set up after a string of botched and corrupt Customs investigations – are already failing as the organisation itself begins to look iffy.

Only a month after joining RCPO in September 2005, chief operating officer Dave Partridge identified the "business need" for a "human resources consultant". He looked at 20 applications for the job before deciding that the best person for the £550-a-day post was, er, Mrs Partridge.

Only after the job was in the bag did Partridge tell his boss, RCPO director David Green QC, who the lucky candidate was. When the National Audit Office raised an eyebrow RCPO bosses (retrospectively) sought the required approval of their Treasury masters who, ever keen to avert a scandal, meekly accepted that RCPO had "sufficient defensive information to demonstrate that the payment was within the bounds of regularity and propriety". They were also reassured that proper procedures were followed when Mrs Partridge was given a lucrative contract extension in July. The NAO wasn't convinced; nor are the Public Accounts Committee likely to be when they question Green shortly.

The auditors also found an alarming absence of financial control, leading to £4.9m in unexpected legal bills from barristers taken on by the prosecutors and no procedures for keeping m'learned friends' demands in check beyond haggling after the event. One bill, for £990,000, was reduced to £550,000 on closer examination.

Unsurprisingly the auditors wouldn't vouch for RCPO's latest figures, which might yet prove "materially understated". It concluded that the RCPO had "a limited understanding of the routine duties involved in basic financial accounting" resulting in accounts with "a significant number of errors".

And this is the outfit that's supposed to nail the most sophisticated financial criminals!

Don't ask for credits

JUST as the Chancellor pushes millions into greater dependency on the most complicated means-tested benefit on record, tax credits, he is cutting back on help for those struggling to get to grips with the system.

Under pressure for "efficiency" savings and with the Mapeley STEPS contract for all its buildings soaking up billions, HM Revenue and Customs needs to reduce its accommodation costs by 30 percent. That means scores of office closures to go with job cuts of 25,000 following further budget cuts.

Millions tearing their hair out over incomprehensible tax credit underpayments and overpayments are increasingly left dealing with call centres, or much reduced "points of presence" in their towns under a "Face 2 Face" initiative which insiders say just doesn't have enough staff.

To alleviate some of the pressure HMRC has made the unlikely admission that dealing with the modern tax system is a case for the kind souls running charities – or the "voluntary sector" as it prefers. A host of these have been established in recent years, including Taxaid and Tax Advice for Older People (TOP), and are funded by the lottery and HMRC itself.

Gordon was anxious to present his recent budget as "modernising the personal tax system". But for millions it has become more complex, while tax offices close and charities are asked to pick up the pieces. Modern indeed.

In the City

ONCE AGAIN Labour has turned its attention to the fight against fraud, and not just by abolishing juries. There was word last month from the Dear Leader's legal poodle, the attorney general Lord Goldsmith, of plans for a National Fraud Strategic Authority and a National Fraud Reporting Centre "to provide a one-stop shop for victims".

This all sounds depressingly familiar. Back in March 2000, the then home secretary Jack Straw launched Partners Against Crime, an initiative backed by the CBI under which companies were encouraged to hire private investigators and forensic accountants to provide evidence against the fraudsters and hand that over to the police, thereby speeding up investigations and convictions – give us the facts and we will finish the job, sir. This time too there is talk of funding from business to boost police resources and results. All this at a time when police forces outside the City have eliminated or downgraded fraud squads.

Partners Against Crime was an embarrassing failure and never produced any cases. Within a year it was quietly buried. Its failure was not altogether surprising as companies did not see why they should pay to do the work of the police, which they fund as taxpayers. And the private investigators licensed to investigate for the police were limited to the big accountants and corporate sleuths. Also, companies have little interest in blowing the whistle on fraud if they can get the money back quietly. Owning up to being taken for a ride is not good for the reputation, especially if no one is convicted.

The Goldsmith initiative, like Partners Against Crime, is backed by the Treasury, which loves privatisation and its false economies. It is also backed by the City Police, which sees fraud investigation as its best defence against absorption by the Metropolitan Police – which, like most police forces, no longer sees fraud as a high priority despite the Goldsmith rhetoric. Goldsmith may equate fraud to drugs but nobody else does. The Association of Chief Police Officers may talk the talk about the multi-billion cost of fraud, but most of its forces know that street crime and burglary are more important to their local political bosses.

The two new bodies announced by Goldsmith also reflect another typical New Labour solution to old problems: form an excitingly titled agency. The Fundamentally Supine Authority had to admit last month that insider trading has gone up on its watch while it has failed to produce even a handful of prosecutions.

The same policy produced the short-lived Assets Recovery Agency, which cost more to run than it collected and has now been quietly folded into Labour's latest crime-fighting creation: the Serious Organized Crime Agency. SOCA itself is keeping very quiet about its first year achievements – for good reasons.

Everyone is in favour of fighting fraud – especially when confronted by the meaningless multi-billion extrapolated estimates for its supposed cost – but nobody knows how to do so in a way that can produce those measurable and triumphant statistics so beloved by Labour politicians. The SFO costs ever more but is being reviewed by Goldsmith over its failure to achieve more and faster. Meanwhile Goldsmith's latest effort to remove juries from notionally only the most complex fraud trials has once again failed in the Lords.

Perhaps the best way to view all this Whitehall hot air is to recall that the CBI chairman who helped launch Partners Against Crime was Sir Clive Thompson, more recently the chairman of European Home Retail which is under investigation by the Department of Timidity & Inaction over the Farepak collapse that hit 120,000 low-income Christmas club savers. Their deposits had been diverted from paying for Christmas hampers to keeping other group companies alive and Thompson and his colleagues in business and generous salaries.

As Lord Goldsmith warned, fraud targets "the vulnerable and elderly, and people can lose their life savings". Perhaps he should make the Farepak case the number one job for his new fraud fighters.

MATTERS have gone from bad to worse for self-proclaimed tax guru Paul Baxendale-Walker. The London solicitor, who featured in a BBC *Money Programme* last year bragging about his ability to save his clients from the excesses of the taxman, has been struck off by the Law Society for hiding from those clients that he was double-dipping by advising them to buy his own tax schemes.

Baxendale-Walker was already suspended following an earlier decision last year by the Law Society over his role in the defrauding of pensioners in a small Scottish company's pension fund of £2.1m. The former lawyer had been charged by the Serious Farce Office over the Balfron scandal, which saw his client, Danish conman Bjorn Steidl, jailed for four and a half years. The charges against Baxendale-Walker were stayed after a High Court judge remarkably decided he was a liar but not dishonest in a case brought by the Balfron pension fund trustees. The trial judge decided it was too risky to allow 12 mere mortals to disagree, so Baxendale-Walker was acquitted.

Baxendale-Walker is reckoned to have been paid some £100,000 to cover his costs over the failed prosecution. He then promised to publish an exposé, "Surviving the SFO". Sadly, before this tale of monstrous injustice could be told, the Law Society were on his case big time.

Undeterred after his latest setback, Baxendale-Walker is now threatening a TV exposé entitled "Noble Cause Corruption", and has launched the Campaign for Professional Justice targeting his regulatory persecutors.

However, the campaign may have several mountains to climb given the wording of the latest withering blast delivered by the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal in January, following a hearing over 15 days in September and an investigation that began in 2002.

Baxendale-Walker was charged with conduct "unbefitting a solicitor" because of an undisclosed conflict of interest resulting from his beneficial control and puppet master of an offshore group, Fiscal Solutions (FSL), which sold tax schemes to his clients. He was also accused of concealing relevant or providing misleading information to third parties. He and another solicitor at his firm, William Auden, were both kicked out. The Law Society accused both men of "conscious impropriety and dishonesty" and said they "deliberately flouted proper standards of conduct". Their motive was "the huge rewards to be reaped from selling such schemes – often £1m plus".

Baxendale-Walker is the co-author of a leading book on trusts and tax with leading tax QC and regular Revenue opponent Andrew Thornhill. Baxendale-Walker claimed his schemes were "so perfect it was impossible to question them".

Baxendale-Walker denied he was the beneficial owner of FSL. But the Law Society described his evidence/explanations as "incredible" saying he had produced documents created after the event and had lied. He was said to have received loans totalling £372,000 from a trust of which he denied he was a beneficiary. The trio Baxendale-Walker claimed were beneficiaries either denied it or could not be found.

The Tribunal held that Baxendale-Walker was a beneficiary. It described his evidence as "unreliable", adding that it had been "modified" as more information was obtained by the Law Society and had been "inconsistent and economical with the truth, sometimes deliberately so as to create a false impression".

Baxendale-Walker had been blindsided when the Law Society obtained documents from the Isle of Man regarding a trust which he assumed would never see the regulatory light of day. Baxendale-Walker tried unsuccessfully to claim using the truth was somehow an abuse of process.

The Tribunal found that FSL and its controlling trust had also provided some £80,000 to Baxendale-Walker's girlfriend, Sam Jessop – by coincidence, also the name of a popular porn model.

The Tribunal held that he had "blatantly ignored" the rules designed to protect clients and was "not a credible witness". It said it could not believe him given that the evidence about his secret ownership was "overwhelming" and his answers "not credible". He and Auden were guilty of "dishonesty". There had been "acute conflicts of interest and duty". Their evidence to the Tribunal had been "untrue" and "cannot have been honestly held".

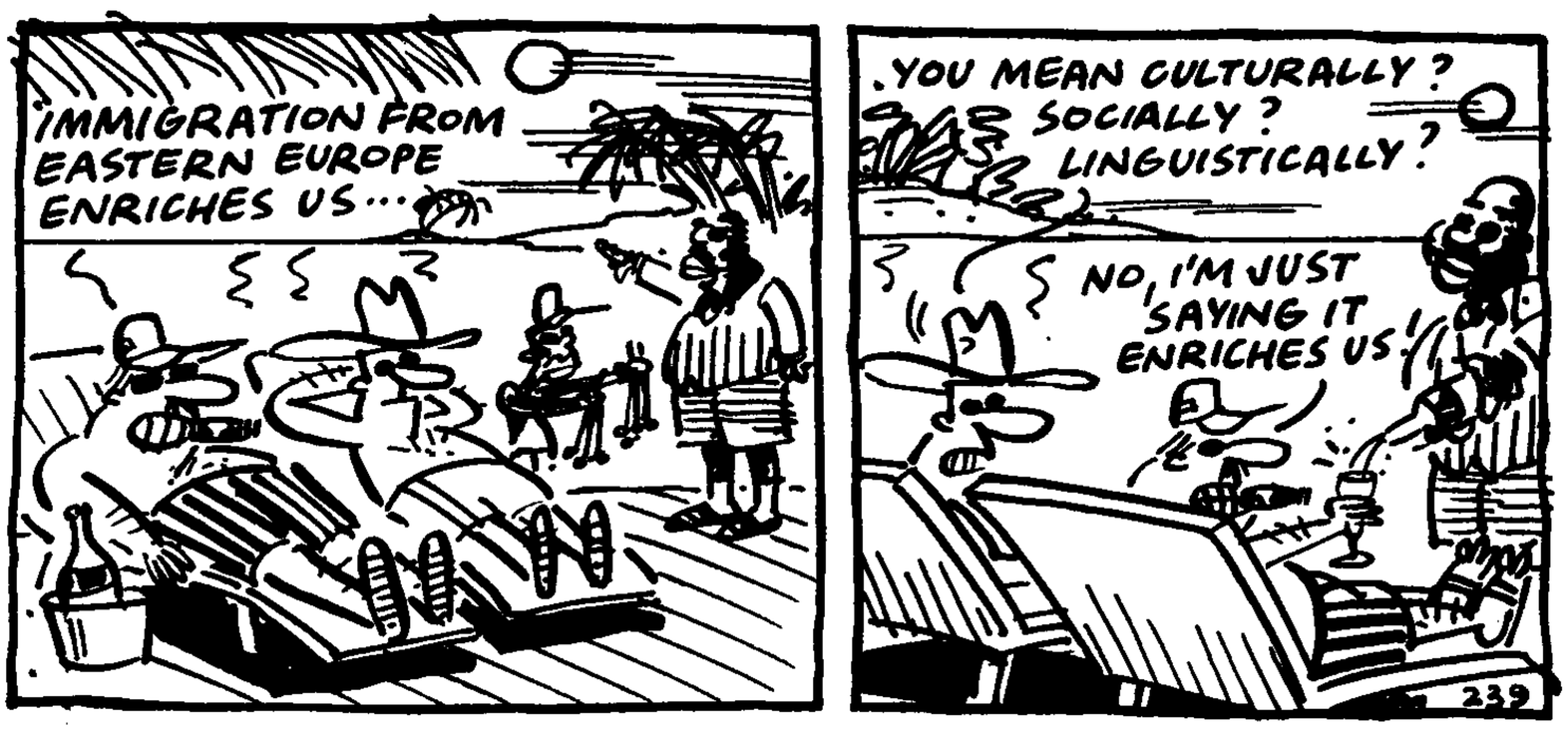
The Tribunal ordered Baxendale-Walker and Auden to pay all the Law Society's costs, with Baxendale-Walker to pick up 75 percent of the tab.

Baxendale-Walker now describes himself as the chairman and director of R&D of Baxendale-Walker MDP, which describes itself as a multi-disciplinary practice, no longer solicitors but "the wealth strategy firm". The right strategy for the wealthy would be to stay well away from Paul Baxendale-Walker.

See over ☛

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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NO, I'M JUST SAYING IT ENRICHES US!
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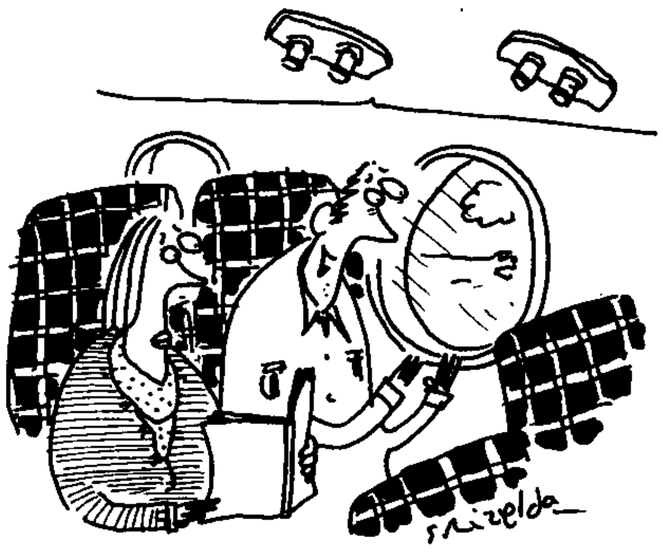


"Wow! You get a great view of the retreating ice caps from up here."

ROY TUCKER is also well known in the tax avoidance world. After Rossminster, which sold Tucker's schemes, was put out of business by the Revenue, Tucker and his business partner Ronald Plummer were hit with tax demands for £16m apiece – a record at the time. These claims were eventually settled for around £6m in 1989. By then Tucker had also been made bankrupt in 1985 over a South African mining venture.

In recent years Tucker has quietly made a comeback in the outer reaches of the AIM and PLUS (formerly OFEX) markets. He is a director of the AIM-listed African Consolidated Resources, which is hoping to mine diamonds in Zimbabwe, and the PLUS-listed Lisungwe, which is exploring in Malawi. Tucker's latest venture is Manx company Guild Acquisitions, another PLUS quote, which launched a £500,000 cash-raising exercise earlier this year. Guild is to make investments in small companies – starting close to home with £100,000 in a Romanian property developer in which Tucker and his old Rossminster buddy and ex-Tory MP Tom Benyon are already investors. Mrs Benyon is a big shareholder, like Tucker, and Tom Benyon works for a PR consultant paid by Guild.

Owing, no doubt, to lack of space, no mention is made of Roy Tucker's colourful business past – only that he has "wide experience in corporate financial strategy, business law, taxation and accounting". Indeed the prospectus goes as far as to state that no director "has been declared bankrupt". Clearly a misunderstanding of what happened all those years ago. But then the Revenue was the only creditor left standing and they were paid. So maybe it never happened and it would be perfectly acceptable to forget about these events of so long ago.

IT HAS emerged that convicted fraudster Leslie Greyling had a passing involvement in the 2005 takeover of struggling Leeds United by former Chelsea chairman Ken Bates.

Sports Investments (Leeds), whose directors included Greyling's son Clinton, held a 17 percent stake in Roman's Heavies, the original special purpose vehicle for the Bates takeover, which ended up with 3 percent of Leeds but was potentially to have more.

The quaintly named company – a swipe at Chelsea and Bates benefactor Roman Abramovich – is now in liquidation. The major shareholder was the Swiss-based Forward Sports Fund which now controls Leeds. It appears that Leslie Greyling, who was also involved in a failed bid for Aston Villa, had been active in approaching the former directors of Leeds before Bates arrived on the scene.

Greyling is still wanted in New York for securities fraud. An attempt to extradite him failed. Doubtless Bates was completely unaware of Greyling's previous when he was a guest in the Leeds director's box in September 2005.

MEANWHILE back at Chelsea it seems that Roman Abramovich will need to reach into his chequebook again before the end of the year, and not for new players but to repay an expensive legacy of the Bates era: the remains of its £75m Eurobond issue. As at June 2006 there was still £36m outstanding and due for repayment this year. Half the issue was redeemed after Abramovich took over. The rest will take the Abramovich investment towards the £600m mark.

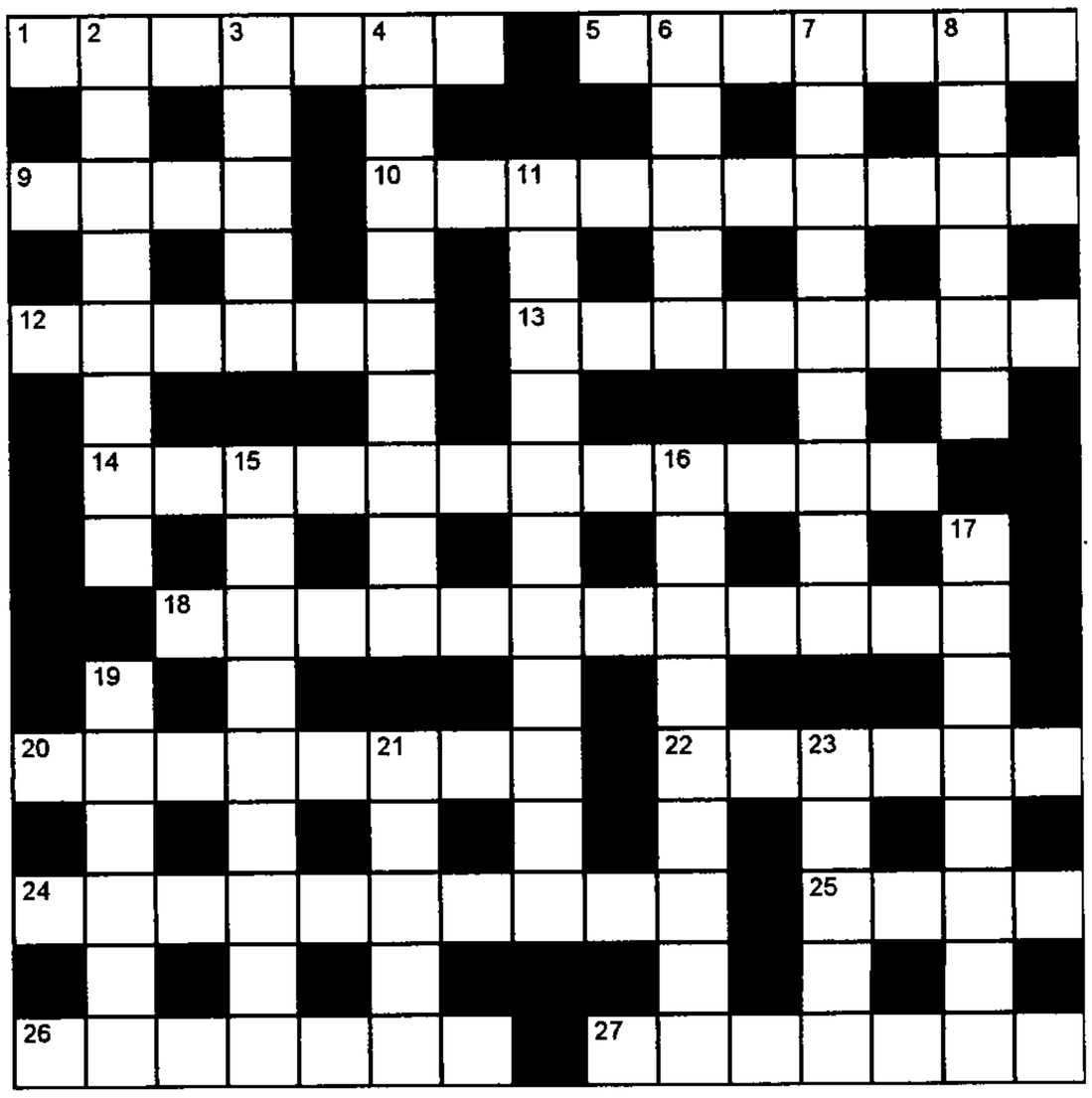
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 338

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 3 May 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Special constable (Yard) briefly squeezes arse for a drink (7)
5 MPs collectively trampled on by all and sundry! (7)
9 Gob that's second to mine (4)
10 Lap dancing FBI hero keeps our police force calm (10)
12 Misplaced zeal in *Sunday Express* leaders that's often associated with politicians (6)
13 Descriptive of George Bush's belligerent craft? (3-2-3)
14 Pop Idol, following The Bill and Iron Express, etc. (7,5)
18 Game piece spotted with the bloke gripped by Conservative notion that one's downfall means the rest will follow (6,6)
20 Like Brenda's mother: a joke to have in charge (8)
22 Girl Alan screwed without, say, withdrawing (6)
24 Left unravelling gal's corset without resistance – price a suitor must pay? (5,5)
25 Boris is buggered without one rather grand pair of tits? (4)
26 What tossers do with a model eastern escort in the main (7)
27 Mark maligned Lib Dems (hard for David initially) (7)

DOWN

2 "Outplace" useless couple (8)
3 Very extreme cult racist drops Conservative Chief Inspector Street (5)
4 Page twice grabbed by Lords member perversely in love – "spicy thing!" (9)
6 Ono in Barking giving head (5)
7 IFS name Tony's half broken election promises (9)
8 Rubbished as a *Sun* "holiday paradise" (6)
11 Having members is compelling for fighting men (5,6)
15 Ozzie's missile gets Roger Moore excited inside (9)
16 Practice of jiggling her arse – Clinton's next in line (9)
17 Education programme's terrible bullshit, say – hit out (8)
19 Calling Prudence "Brenda" (6)
21 Silent air-conditioning in Bristol (5)
23 Good to come suddenly in a big way? Not a gay sort of thing (5)

Crossword 337 winner: ROBERT BOULTON

ACROSS: 8 Plump 9 Paintball 10/20 Cock and bull story 11 Placebo 12 Peace pipe 13 Totem 14 Bulldog 16 Faction 18 Islam 22 Infidel 23 Therapy 25 This way up 26 Merit.

DOWN: 1 OPEC 2 Pub crawl 3 Update 4 Pimple 5 Atlantic 6 Fake it 7 Blood money 9 Pudding 12 Publicists 15 Dumb down 16 Felt-tip 17 Idolatry 19 Leftie 20 Boleyn 21 Steamy 24 Yeti.

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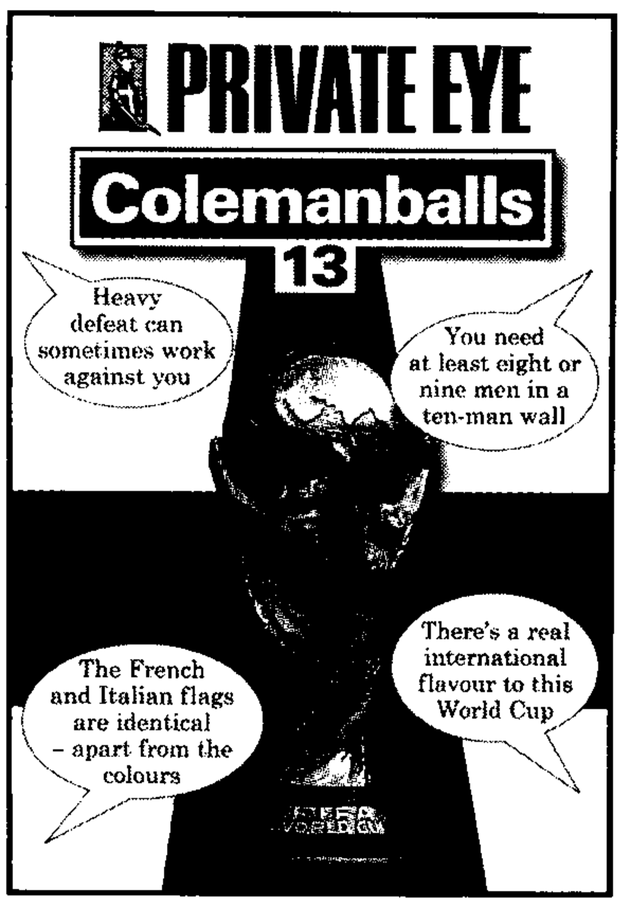
PRIVATE EYE
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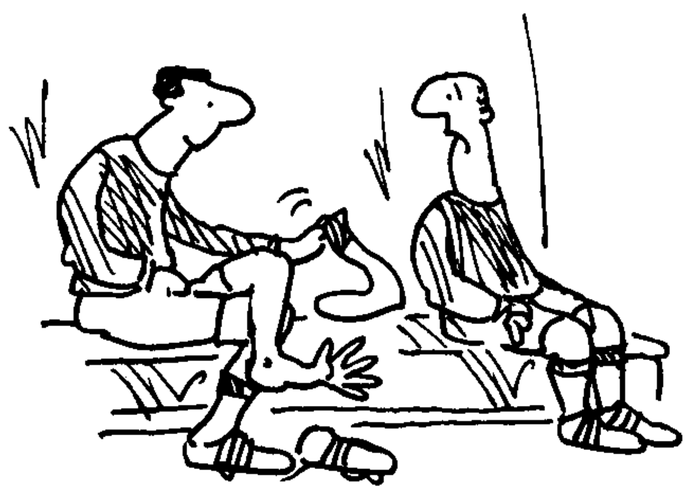
13
Heavy defeat can sometimes work against you
You need at least eight or nine men in a ten-man wall
The French and Italian flags are identical – apart from the colours
There's a real international flavour to this World Cup



"He favours his left-hand foot..."
CHRIS WADDLE

"Many children attend school without a permanent head."
MIKE BAKER

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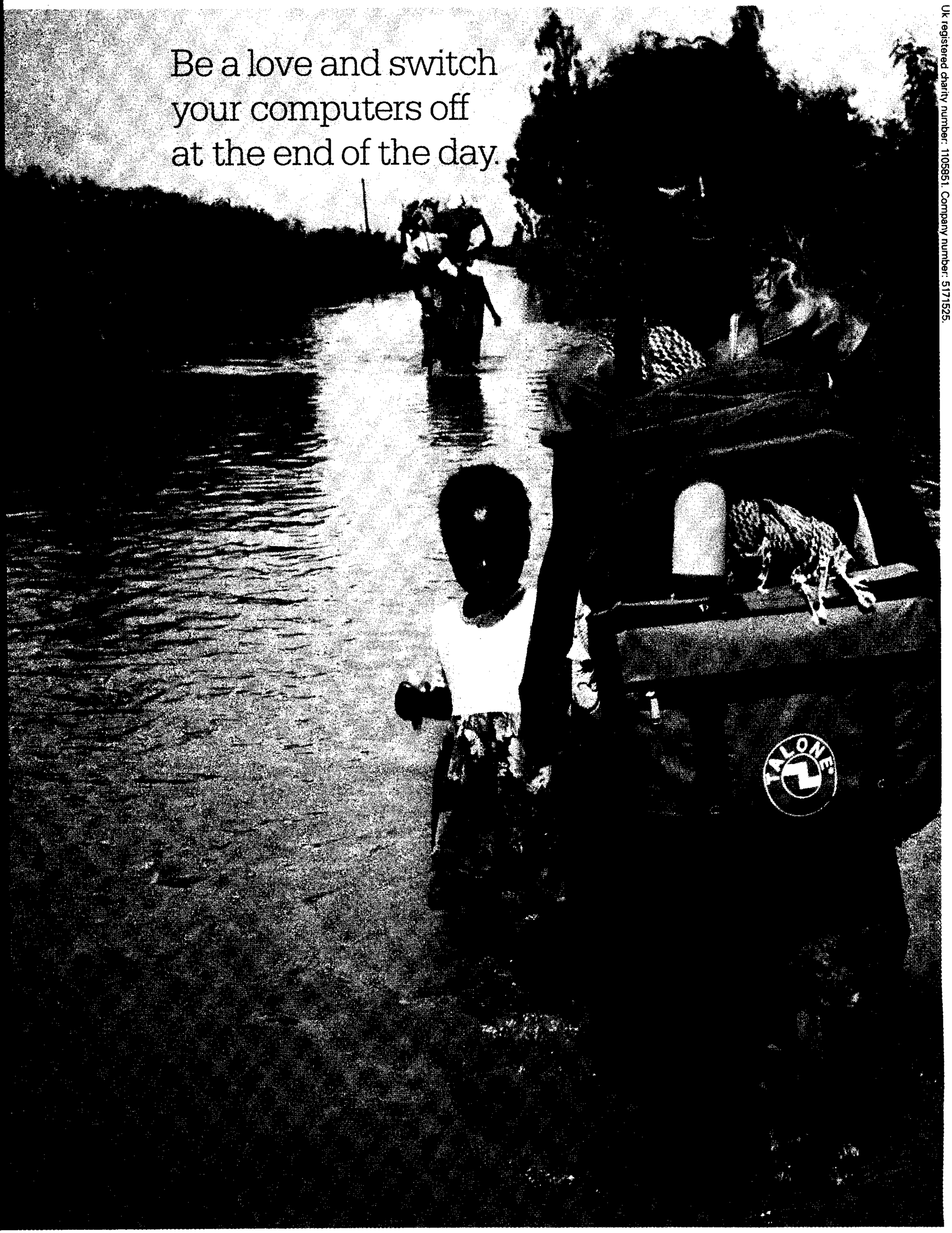

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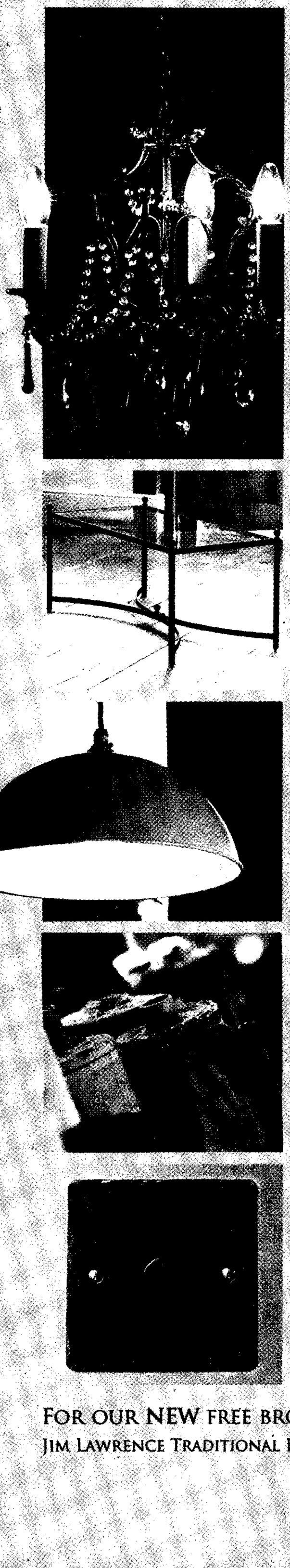
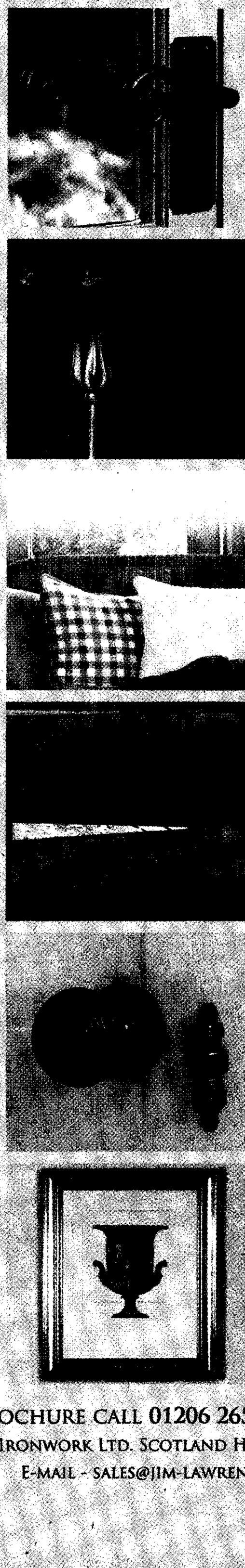
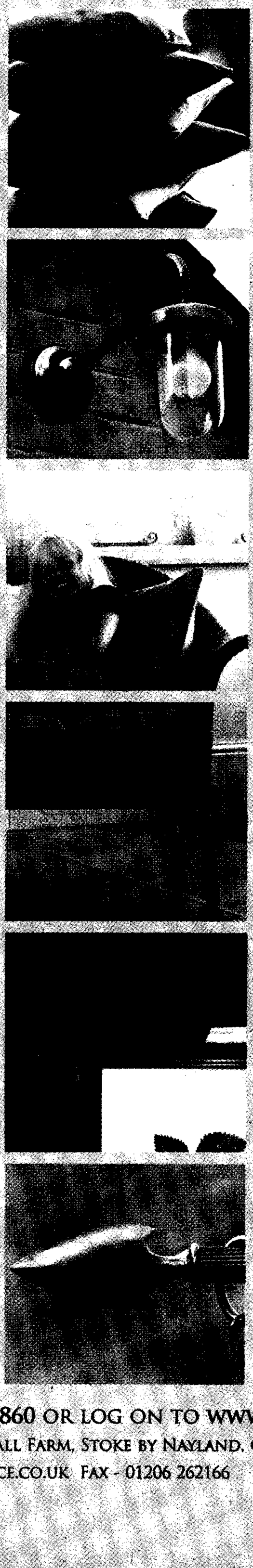
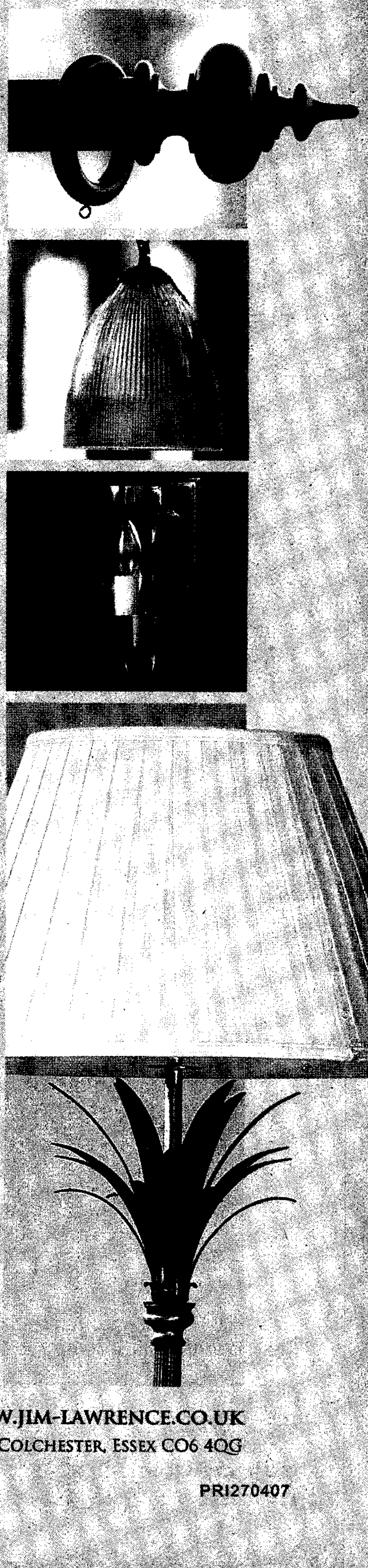

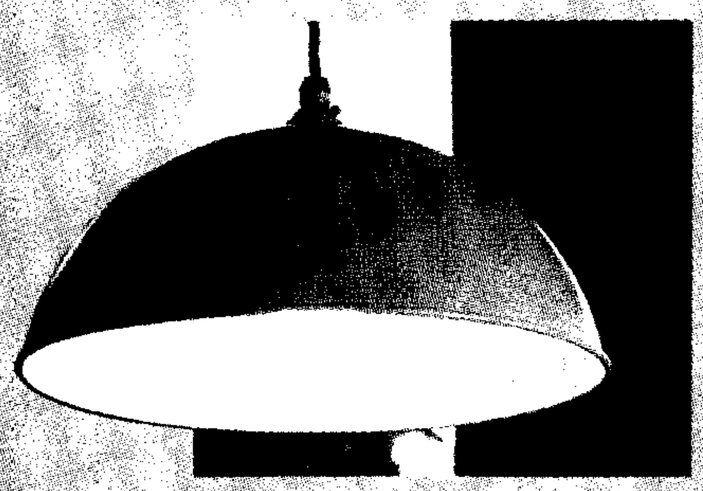

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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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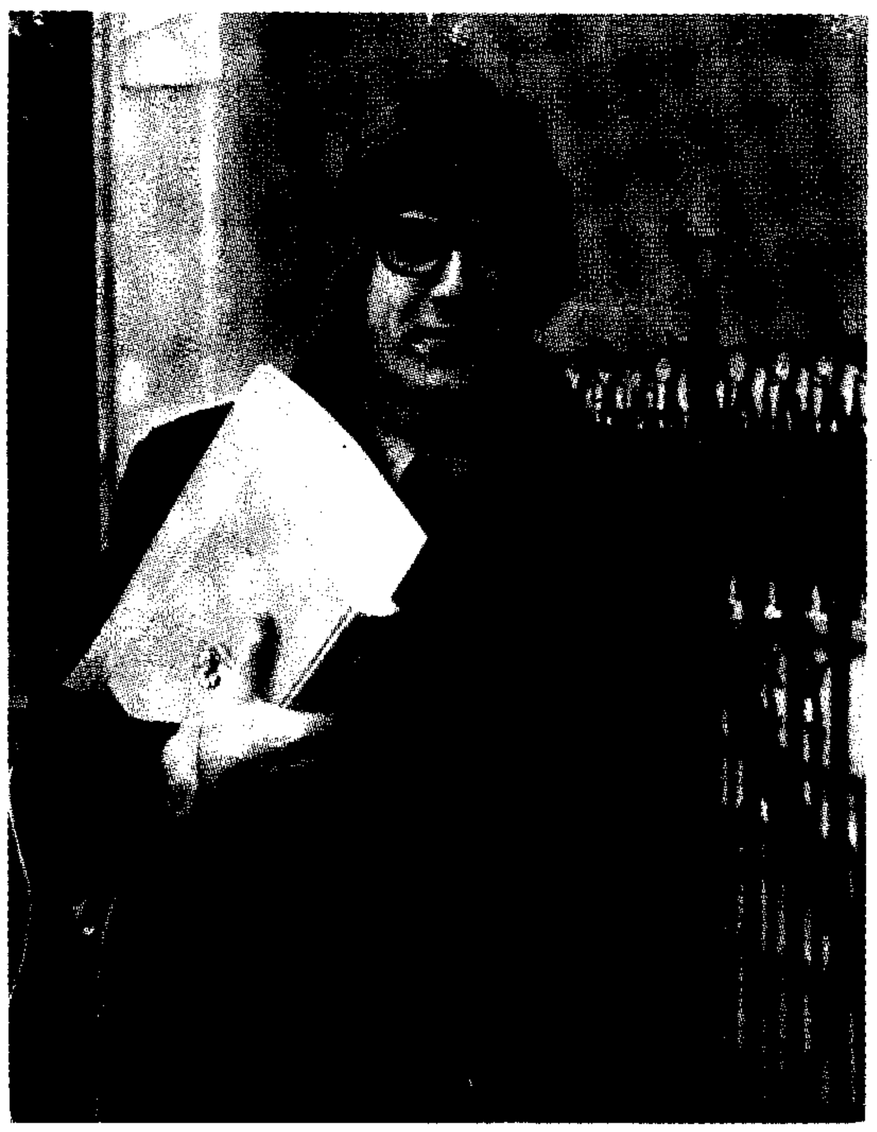

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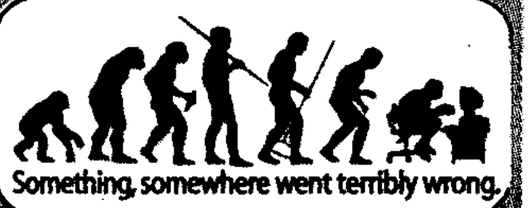

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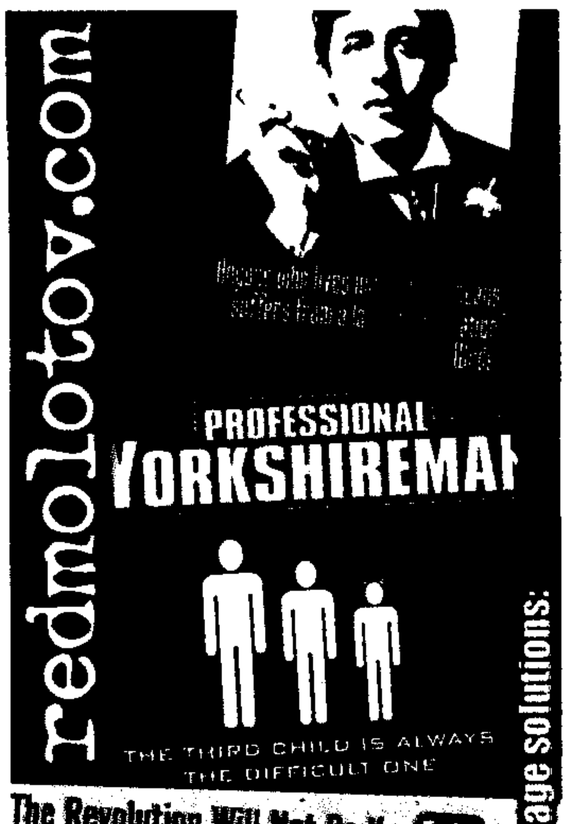

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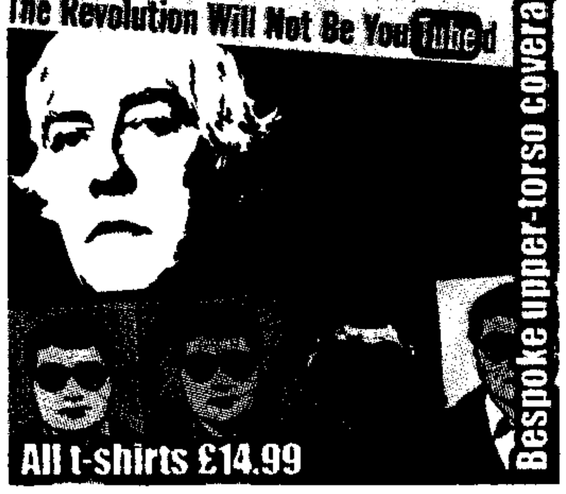

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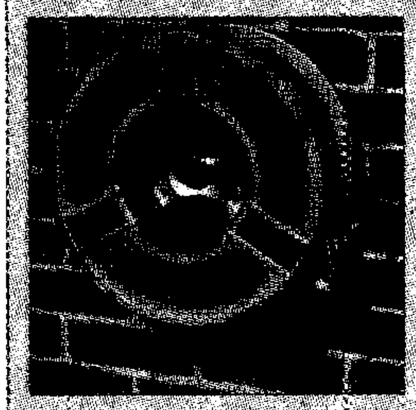

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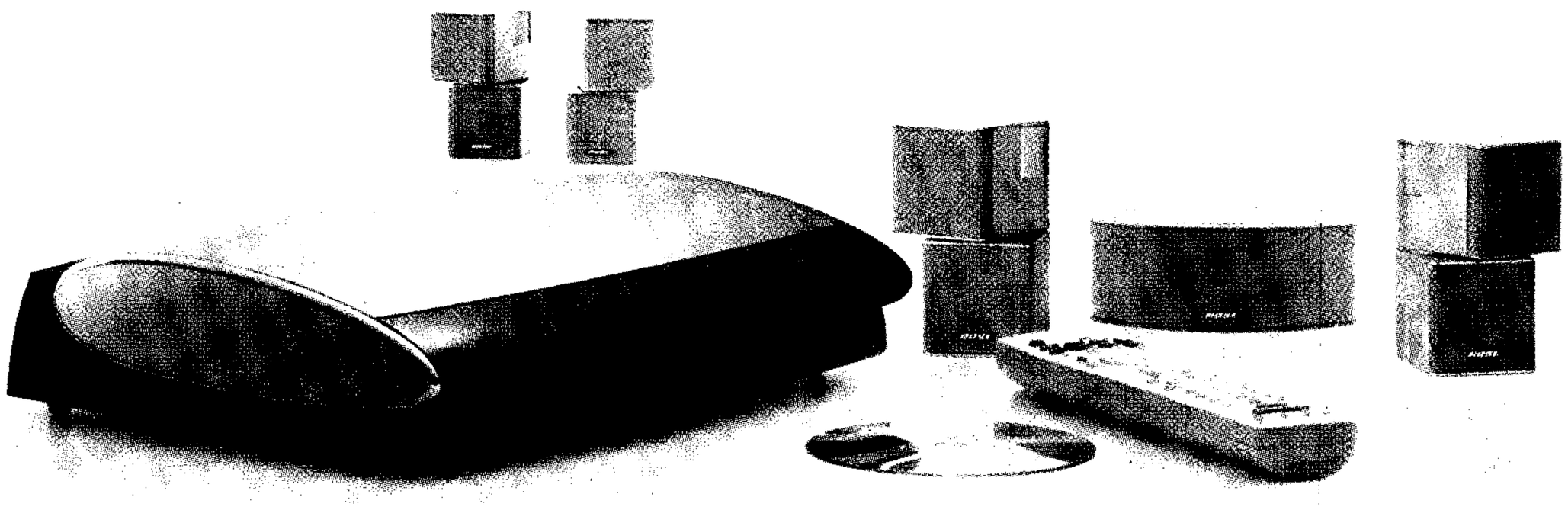

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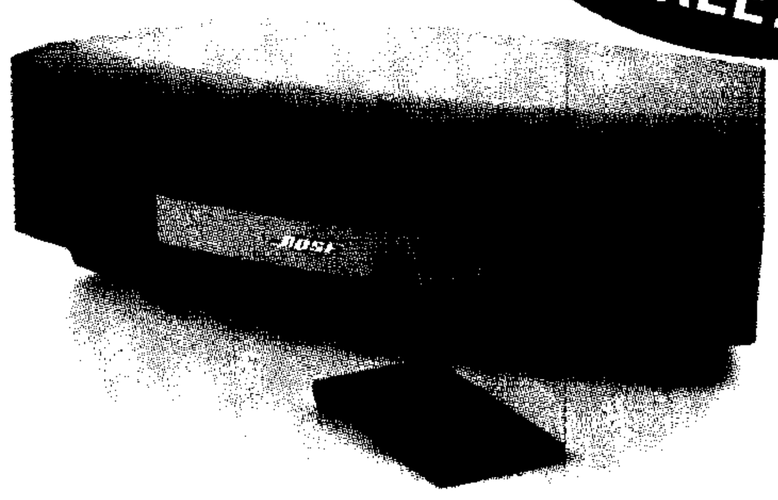

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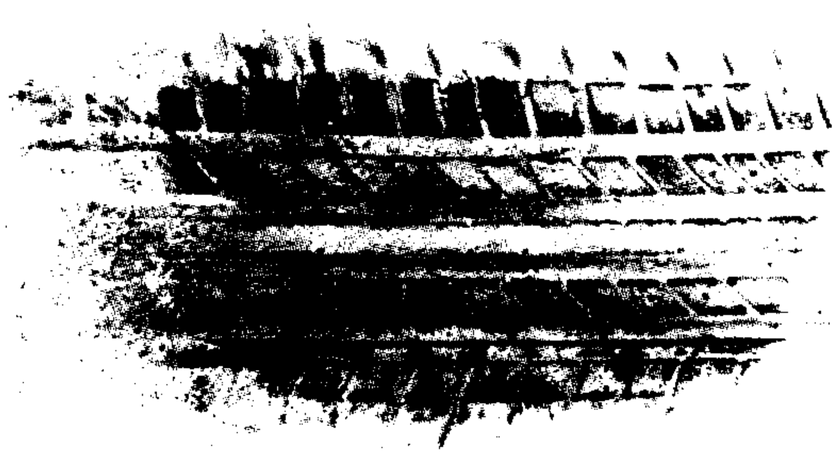

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